Margaret Lynn.

Lawrence, 1920.

FREE SOIL

BY

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A STEPDAUGHTER OF THE PRAIRIE

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TO the ever-loved memory of those men and women who ventured greatly and endured nobly that the new state they were establishing might also be a free state.

Lawrence, Kansas.

FREE SOIL

I

AT the house-door John, a few steps in advance of Ellen, waited and threw a preoccupied, inquiring glance back at her, where she paused at the step in the gravel path—a slim light figure in the open space of moonlight.

"Isn't it lovely?" she said, of the moonlight on the common below them. But she spoke as if only half her thought went to the loveliness. Then recognizing John's patient delay she turned to overtake him.

"I always do my last meditating on the minute-man," she said with a little wave of her hand toward the bronze figure waiting in an eternal stern readiness for duty on the middle of the green. "That is, I pin the end of my thoughts to him and unwind from that."

She turned for another thoughtful look and then let the curve of John's arm draw her into the dark hall. They both listened a minute to the house, in that instant of reoccupation that always followed their return to it. Clocks ticked in different rooms, and from the kitchen chamber Ann Martin, noisily asleep, could be heard.

"I must look at the boys," said Ellen, taking a candle from the hall-table and lighting it. Through the quick definite manner with which she always went about her business, a subtraction of absent-mindedness was clear.

John watched her slipping up the stairs, the candle under her guarding hand flickering on the high points of her face and turning the frame of brown hair to pale gold. Her skirt brushed softly along the hall and the faint light disappeared and he was left in darkness.

He made his familiar way into the large front room to

the right, but instead of lighting a lamp he opened all the blinds and the outer door at the side, and seated himself where the long parallelogram of moonlight fell on the carpeted floor. He looked down across the common and saw the lights still in the windows of the white meetinghouse from which he had come. Men were still talking there and he could well guess what they were saying. People crossed the common or stood there together in talk. He could catch their voices. Sometimes a man's hard fist smote on a solid palm, or a woman's voice broke on a high last word. He knew their phrases and their theme. He knew what the men clustered about the pulpit in the meetinghouse were saying.

But it was not for him to make up his mind among the talk of many. For others the group, argument, voices; for him the quiet room and Ellen's light step overhead.

Within two hours the whole question had arisen. Two hours ago the current of life, the current set in channel by his father and his grandfather before him, had been moving steadily on the only course he had known. Abruptly, within that time—this mild spring evening while he sat in the familiar surroundings of the meetinghouse—there had come before him the chance to change that current. More than a chance, an urgent clamorous call, a militant call, and he to choose whether to answer it or no.

He watched the right-angled windows of the church dim and darken and the moonlight take possession of the green. People wandered on to their places and their voices came to an end.

He reviewed the meeting he had come from. It was not by any means the first abolition meeting he had been in. Sometimes he had instigated them himself; often he had led them or at least spoken earnestly. For months past no theme had held his feelings more, or more potently. The steady quiet zeal for righteousness that had formed his type of citizenship and neighborliness and had dictated his own degree of goodness of life, had all glowed into burning heat in his hatred of slavery and devotion to the abolition of it from the country. In his quiet way he had woven it in

among his own affairs and into all his thought of public matters. To John Truman speech alone was never satisfying.

But two hours before this he had sat with Ellen beside him in his pew—once his father's and once again his grandfather's—in no hopeful mood. Of late it had been no novelty to see the church lighted for a secular meeting. Fiery old Parson Medlar had declared once for all that an abolition meeting was a religious meeting, and more than once he had announced such a one, with challenge in his voice and a longing for battle. John Truman had gone always, and listened and acquiesced and spoken earnestly.

But tonight as he sat there waiting for the lawmaker who was to speak to them and watching the audience gather, he acknowledged himself unexpectant. Speeches and speeches he had heard, and resolutions and memorials and denunciations—and the cause of abolition was daily more hopeless and slavery more triumphant. All that he had thus far been concerned in was futile and idle. Speeches!—If there were anything a man might put his hand to and see a result! He envied, as he had a hundred times, the minute-man on the common, carrying on from generation to generation his bronze declaration of resolve to ask for a cause. John Truman belonged to a race with causes. Each generation found itself not quite at home on the earth until it had discovered its cause and mated with it. In abolition John Truman seemed to have found his.

But tonight he sat unexpectant while the crowd gathered. He had seen the most of them at successive meetings in church and town hall and home—eager impractical abolitionists, solid anti-slavery politicians, honest freemen instinctively demanding fairness for every man born. Once he had been pleased only with numbers in such an audience, counting that strength for the cause—but he had listened to their talk and heard their resolutions, and what had followed? Now he appraised them and the occasion unhopefully.

The white old preacher introduced the speaker, and the tall slender form and pleasant bearded face of Eli Thayer rose before them. In those days a New England audience

still loved and respected a lawmaker, and the meeting turned approving and expectant eyes upon him. But John Truman waited, uncommitted in mind. Every one knew the outrage Congress seemed about to offer, repudiating her word of thirty-five years ago, making her contract as trifling a thing as the shifty promise of a dishonest man. So the most of New England thought, fiery and ashamed. But what was the use of hearing again how venal politicians were to discard the Missouri Compromise and open all new states to slavery at the vote of the inhabitants, no matter whether the state was north or south? Who could tell it more strongly than it had already been told, or add to the fear that waited at the hearts of all New England? John Truman expected no satisfaction in hearing the tale.

Then, almost before he realized it, he found himself listening to a practical thing, a proposal so logical and business-like and simple in Eli Thayer's telling, and yet so heroic and high-minded and adventurous, that it seemed a wonder every man had not thought of it for himself and leaped to make the chance his own. If the Kansas-Nebraska Bill was passed by this slavery administration and these newly-divided territories became the objective of the slavery party and if the fate of the new states lay in the hands of the voters—why not send free-state voters to fill the territory? It did not need the clear persuasive statement of the speaker nor the impression of great humanity and devotion that he gave, to make Truman's heart leap in quick acquiescence to the plan.

Here and there about the room he saw the heads of shrewd men and earnest women nod thoughtful approval. Elsewhere the critical eye or frown of a non-resistant rejected the proposal. Eli Thayer passed from definite statement to vigorous plea and ended with what sounded almost like a cry of desperation. "The slavery forces are every year better organized, more open in intention, harder to fight. And when have we fought them except in futile talk? They have Missouri, they have Texas—shall they have Kansas, men? Has not New England men—many men—to go out there for the making of a state and withholding a beautiful territory from disgrace? This has

ceased to be a dishonor peculiar to one section of the country, a thing we can relegate to one place. It is a national thing, your infamy and mine! Is your shame over it great enough to make you pioneers in a new country, to keep it free? Your grandfathers fought over beyond that hill to make this country free. Did they think they were making a home for slavery after it had been driven out of all the rest of the world? Men of Bristol, will any of you go to Kansas!"

He ended, but still stood under the yellow light of the big pulpit lamp and kept earnest eyes upon them, as if in his own mind his appeal yet went on. As he sat down Parson Medlar rose in his place and looked over his people. "I am too old to go," he said humbly and sadly. Then he raised white hands of prayer, "O Lord, grant that from Bristol men may go to keep Kansas from slavery."

A kind of awe fell upon the meeting, as if here and there feelings were forming into resolution.

From a seat under the gallery Captain James Howard rose and came forward. He was a tall nobly-made old man, who for forty years had worn finely the lameness he got in the War of 1812.

"With your permission, Mr. Thayer and Mr. Medlar," he said, "I should like to read some portions of a letter I have had only today from the territory of Kansas. It is from a young relative who has gone out there to seek his fortune. 'I tell you it was God's chance of a lark that sent me out here'—I hope you will overlook the light language," Captain Howard interposed apologetically. "He is scarcely more than a youth. 'If I had to go back tomorrow I would be paid and over for coming—only I am not going back. You couldn't dream of such a country unless you saw it. It's as different as if the Lord had changed His style between times. It rolls and rolls and the thick grass goes up hill and down. When the crops come the grass will go and that will be a pity, but they will be crops to console a nation. Tell everybody that wants good land and plenty of it and some excitement thrown in, to come out here. As soon as they begin to organize this territory there will be something to do. The slavery men intend to have something to say

about it. They are lined up on the border three deep any day all ready for the word go. There is going to be a rumpus out here that would make New England stand on her head and shake. Everybody that didn't have fun enough in the forties better bring his gun and come on. If you missed any shots in your day, uncle, and have anything in lead to say about slavery, now's your time.' I think," said the captain reluctantly, "that it will be better on second thoughts, to omit the too hurried phrasing of the rest of the letter. But my young relative shows a conviction of the serious condition of the country and the fixed plan of the slavery forces to occupy it by any means, fair or foul.

"It is not for one who cannot go himself to urge others to take the risk. But I wish that I were young enough to turn the soil of a new country and if necessary to fight for her freedom. It is long since so heroic and so noble a chance has been offered in these later days. I envy those who have the right to go." He limped painfully to his place.

From the back of the room came a nervous strident voice, preceding the appearance of the owner of it. Abner Williams talked in season and out of season and he came down the aisle now in excited speech.

"It will not do! It is a subterfuge! It is a weak makeshift! It is compromising with the crime of slavery. It is a paltry expedient. We cannot meet slaveholders on equal ground. We cannot make terms with them. The only thing northern freemen can do is to cast them off utterly. We must separate ourselves from them, not go to live among them and be paid to do so with the price of new farms."

He flung denunciatory arms aloft and shook an indignant beard as he uttered his wild abolition protest and continued it in his shrieking repetitions. A murmur of protest drowned out the few agreeing voices. In the midst of it Squire Landrum, solid and bearded, sprang up from his corner of the pew where a Landrum had sat ever since one had put his strong hand to the building of the church.

"My brother," he said, his big voice pursuing Williams down the aisle and quieting instantly all the murmurs and exclamations in the room, "I have been to many anti-slavery

meetings and have heard all your speakers, first and last. But this is the first one where I have heard a practical suggestion, a thing that could be carried out for a definite result. To save that new state from slavery would be as patriotic a thing as any of our fighting men ever did. I have passed the years of pioneering or adventure, but I will gladly help to care for the wife or children of any younger man who can go to Kansas to fight slavery."

John saw eyes glisten and heads nod solemnly as talk went on. He saw how the spirit of New England, questing long and anxiously for means to meet slavery, lifted its head eagerly and listened to this chance. Behind Simeon Bancroft's folded lips, behind David Lang's darkly bright eyes, behind Winston Jones' eagerly-lifted look, he could guess what thoughts were going on. For one flash, almost dazing him in passing, he saw the fathers of these men and women, lifting the same look to meet an earlier chance of great endeavor and welcoming it.

The meeting had broken up in talk, excited talk. But John Truman never reached a decision in talk. He had come away in silence, though he saw others send inquiring looks after him. He did not even approach the speaker as a man of his position might be expected to do. He came slowly across the green with Ellen, she also silent but looking as if with intention at all they passed, at the "other church" bravely Gothic and brown, though built of wood, at the pillared front of the white townhall, calm and sober and civic, at the beautiful old homes fronting irregularly around the common. It was as if she were thinking of them with sudden fresh interest, as if she were earnestly considering them instead of slavery and Eli Thayer. John did not talk even to her. It seemed to him as if he were on the point of choosing once for all between words and action.

He held decision in check though, in his firmly controlled fashion, until this moment of quiet purposed thought. He knew that in feeling his choice had been made instantly. All his heart had leaped forward on the very

moment all his hate of slavery, all his love of right. Yet he held his heart in rein to wait upon reasonable consideration. The established life here and his place in it, an honorable place—the boys—Ellen—what of them all? He looked down across his own lawn and past the great Truman elm which his great-grandfather had planted, to the smooth home-place of the common and the serene settled houses facing it, and thought long. His people had made this life. Was it not his place to keep it alive and add to it? A quick gleam of what he should miss in leaving it behind flashed across him. But he let that pass. There was his father and his father and his father—was his race ever to settle down on accomplishment achieved?—or to let a new cause always enlist it? For Ellen—ah, yes! A year or two or more without her, hard enough, God knew—but she would say him Godspeed. He knew Ellen.

Ellen came down the stairs and entered the room. She carried a lamp now instead of a candle and walked with her face and head lighted and her wide trailing skirt in shadow. As she had looked thoughtfully at the familiar things on the common, so he looked at her now. The light in her hand vivified her beyond even her usual brightness. That and something else perhaps gave her a glow and vividness that would have drawn the eyes of any one. To all that belonged to the type of her race Ellen Truman had added something for herself; to soft brownness of hair and clear blueness of eye and fairness of cheek and all in the face that indicated sweetness and fine temper and conscience, she had added a brightness, a quickness of effect, a sparkle, that lifted all her other elements into higher light. One could not tell where it lay—in an archness of glance passing into steadiness, in a flash of brightness that passed over her face before she spoke—something startled one into expectation of satisfaction at sight of her.

Above the light she tried to see John's face.

"Ellen," said John solemnly, "I am going to Kansas."

Ellen went to set the lamp in place on the mantel and

then came over to sit beside him. All her movements were definite and ready and light.

"I think we should go," she said in practical tones.

"Ellen!" cried John, springing alertly into protest. "Ellen, you don't understand. It's not the place for women yet—not even you. And it's not the place for children. Men ought to go and I ought to be one. I can see it plainly. And I can plan it so that things will go on here and you will not suffer in any way, dear. And then after things are settled you can come out—if it seems wise." Recognition of wisdom seemed to lie with him.

"If it seems wise!" Ellen mimicked him a little, gently. "John Truman! We've been married eight years nearly, and you still need a primer of me. You don't know me yet. They don't need just men out there. They need settlers, to make a country. Men can't simply go out and vote. They must make homes. And how much of a settler would you be without us?"

"I shouldn't be much of anything without you, dear," said John a little humbly. "But how can I let you do anything so hard? You don't know what the chances are."

"It's the chance I want—'God's chance of a lark'! I hope we shall meet that canty young man out there. John —just think that it might be my duty as well as yours. You are not the only abolitionist in this pair." She took the sharpness off the words with a quick smile and a little touch to his arm.

"But, Ellen, it would be the opening of a new life altogether out there. They do need women, perhaps, but it will be women of a different kind from you. You are strong, but it needs a coarser kind of strength. It would be hard and rough and it might even be dangerous. It is not the place for women like you."

"Where would you be if your great-grandmother and your grandmother had been afraid of a hard rough life? John—think how well-ordered and daily-breaded I have been all my life! Don't you think women want any work as well as men? I've never had a chance to make anything except clothes in my life—not even counterpanes. Your

mother and mine left enough of everything to do to the fourth generation. I should have to make them for my great-grandchildren, and I'm not going to do them out of their stint. Our grandfathers did all the making that's to be done here—houses and churches and tablecloths and everything—for the next fifty years. They thought it was enough for us just to be born to take care of what they had made. And I'm tired of it. I was *born* to go to Kansas."

"But, Ellen, dear—you don't fully realize what it would be."

"I could find out as I went along. I have as much right to hardness as you have. I want to camp and go and see and build a little new house and make things do and see a country get its start. I've always wanted it. You don't know how all the busy old Trumans that stay around here"—she glanced humorously at the dim walls—"have been edging me out of the house ever since I came. And they were just filled fat with work themselves."

John laughed. "They had their own Kansases," he said. He mused awhile. "I suppose that is why we want ours. The strain isn't lived out yet. This is of the same color as the things they did. And men must go to Kansas. The thing must be done." He rose and moved about the room in serious thought. "And I can go. We can afford it. And I am strong. And the place may attract adventurers and steady men ought to go, too. I must go, Ellen. The duty is plain before me. If slavery is ever to be put out of this country we must be ready to sacrifice for it."

"My duty is plain before me, too," said Ellen calmly. "You haven't all the sense of responsibility in this family. That work can't be done by men alone."

"But the boys, dear? They will soon be ready for school—and church and other things."

"They have as much right to a Kansas as your grandfather and mine did. It's their chance too, John. It's our people—we can't help it. And I'll teach them for the first years. I probably should anyway. And there will be compensations for the other things they will miss. They may get something as good as churches, in its way. You couldn't be selfish, John."

"Selfish, dear?" said John.

"Are you going to go off and do a big thing and leave us at home to stand and wait? I don't care about also-serving. You can do that when you can't do anything else. How do you know this isn't my duty?"

John walked to and fro or stopped in the moonlighted door in thought. Ellen said her mind and then sat still by the lamp and watched him. "He is the man to go," she said to herself as her eyes followed him and saw in him at once all she had seen in her years of knowing him. She looked from the portraits on the wall back to him and saw how he carried that strong earlier type, but smoothed and softened, the assertiveness modified to sweetness, with a touch of mysticism added. No one knew so well as she how ardently he demanded rightness of life, or how inextricably, in his mind, helpfulness must be woven into that rightness. Any one in trouble was glad to meet John Truman's kind blue eyes, with a hope for a chance of helpfulness in their sympathy. Yet he was not a man who lived entirely at ease with himself. He was too stern in his demand for simplicity of motive, for clear consistency of action. The geniality of his face might easily pass over into austerity, but it was often an austerity directed toward himself. Ellen knew now, as she watched his tall figure passing between her and the moonlight, that he was thinking over this matter of her going from the side of her right and trying to put aside his scruple and feeling. He might not succeed and she might have to argue again, but that would be his effort.

He came back to her presently and she rose to her feet as he took her hands. "I must go," he said solemnly. "I thought that I should come back when the work was done or that you would come out when we had accomplished what we came for. But you will come when you see right. You have a right to judge for yourself. But oh, my dear, what should I say if any harm should come to you! It may be hard, hard."

Ellen's hands trembled in his for a moment. Then she flung herself eagerly upon him. "Oh, John beloved," she cried, "it is going to be like creation and the declaration

of independence and a crusade and the honeymoon! How can a thing like slavery stand against that?" she added solemnly. "Don't think it is only adventure either. I must go."

They stood together for a moment as if an instant of a great new life had descended upon them. Quick steps came along the road and they remembered the open door and moved apart. The steps came flying up the walk and up on the porch. Some one battered at the door and their young cousin, Harvey Sayre, looked in at them, mischief combining with intense excitement in his boyish face.

"Haven't you any place to sleep?" asked Ellen, looking at him gravely.

"Several," he answered, "but this is the only place in the village where one can begin a pleasant visit after eleven o'clock at night."

"Were you thinking of beginning anything?" asked John, examining him soberly.

"I'm going to Kansas!" the boy burst out, trying to reduce his radiant excitement to an outer aspect of resolution.

"Harvey!" cried Mrs. Truman. "Have you considered?"

"I've considered for the last two hours. I've decided."

"What will you do out there? There is nothing but farming."

"It sounds to me from all I hear as if there will be something more exciting." Harvey let his real enthusiasm show through a gap.

"Harvey," said John Truman seriously, "this is not merely an adventure. It is something to go into earnestly. There may be fighting, but that will be secondary to something else. One ought not to go merely to fight."

"No, but I'd like to see something doing for once in my life. Anyway," he added soberly, "it might be good for me. I don't suppose I can ever go back to Cambridge."

Ellen Truman's face grew tender as she looked at him and remembered the family lot over on the hill beyond the church, where lay the boy's father and mother and his

older brother and beautiful young sister. She remembered how the fear for him had kept even his advisers from offering any plan for his life that would give it a hard purpose or continued motive. Perhaps this was a chance for him too.

"You shall go with us," she said.

"Us—you!" cried the boy. He looked at John Truman but turned again to Mrs. Truman. "Are you going? It isn't the place for women. They aren't there yet."

"They'll be there soon," she said.

Buoyant as his own spirits were at the prospect of adventure and novelty, he yet looked in boyish wonder at the fine delight of her face and the exalted joyousness of her manner. There was more than mere delight in her look, but whatever of devotion and conscience it held was given quality to by her barefaced satisfaction.

"You look like Lady Galahad," he said bluntly.

"I've been waiting a long time for something like this. It can't pass me now."

Over beyond the common, beyond the curve of the Great Road, where the hillside sloped down to the swampy border of the brook, another house was lighted. This was a cottage, meager and undistinguished, one of the rearward fringe of meek houses with which such a village as Bristol says that men cannot all be equally fortunate. Here, too, a man and woman burned a light. They were older by fifteen years than the Trumans. The woman was in bed under shabby limp coverlets, her sharpened features rising piercingly from a thin flat pillow, her eyes on her husband who was occupied in some undefined way at an old desk in the corner of the room. He was grizzled and browned and handled his body in a vague negligent sort of way. When he turned his face and look, however, one had the same kind of fresh surprise as when one stops to read a passage in a dull badly-printed book and finds it amazingly full of tense feeling and devotion. At first his answers to his wife's desultory words, thrown out vaguely in the hope of catching something perceptible from him, were preoccupied, colorless.

At last he turned definitely to her. "I am going away again soon," he said.

The woman rose suddenly to her knees in the bed as if she had been expecting and fearing this and her words before had been merely reaching for it. "I knew it! I knew it!" she cried. "I can tell! Something will happen to you sometime. They'll catch you at it. They're getting sharper all the time. They'll put you in jail. They'll mob you!" Her voice rose higher with each sentence and broke helplessly and unmusically as she went on. "They nearly got you when you took those men out of Ohio. Leave them where they belong. It does such a little bit of good to get one or two."

She was no figure of tragedy, scarcely even of pathos, as she knelt awkwardly in the bed, her coarse yellow ill-fitting gown making her angular outline more unlovely, her straying hair taking her last chance of grace. But her husband looked at her tenderly as he said gently, "It isn't that, Harriet. This will be different. The other will go on still. Every man's life is worth while, no matter how you get hold of it. But all they can do that way is only a drop in the bucket. We have to fight slavery directly. I am going to Kansas to do it."

"But how—how, Amos?"

"Fist to fist or gun to gun or knife to knife, however it may be." His belligerent words were all inappropriate to his type.

"Oh, Amos!" She flung herself forward on the bed with a movement unnatural to her years and un-grace, but with a feeling that summed up many months of anxiety and privation. "Amos, don't go! You'll be killed!"

"It is the Lord's cause. I do not fear for myself." He came over and raised her gently and stood with his arm about her lean body. "They are his enemies. I cannot but fight them."

"Why should you be the one?" said his wife, pushing back her thin gray-streaked hair to press her face against him.

"Why not I?" he answered. "Harriet," he said, putting work-curved fingers gently on her hair, "I must go.

The Lord expects me. It is your part to let me go." He forced her carefully back into place and covered her again with the faded blue coverlet. "I was looking to see what I could sell this time," he said, "so that you would have money on hand. I can leave you enough to do until fall anyway. I'll leave it with Squire Landrum."

"Oh, Amos," she still moaned, turning her face into the pillow. "You'll be killed. You will never come back."

"Some men will be killed before this is over." Another man might have said this grimly, but there was only solemnity in Amos Wright's tone.

John Truman sat late by his open doorway, until the rectangle of moonlight lost all its right angles and slid past him and lay in a narrowing slanting bar across the floor. Ellen had slipped away. He knew that upstairs she was brooding over their sleeping boys and forecasting the chances of the new life for them. He looked at his life as a whole—the long straight even course up to this moment, and now the sudden elbow in it that took it off into the new. Solemn as his purpose was and high as was his readiness for sacrifice, there was also something in him that leaped forward to catch at adventure—and perhaps wild gallant fight. And for Ellen—ah, Ellen would only add a golden light to any life.

II

OUT beyond the Missouri a state was coming to life—but coming to life with such throes and strivings as to make life seem for the moment a bitter gift. Usually the territorial chrysalis is slit gently and naturally and a state instantly spreads its civic wings. And no one is greatly concerned but the chrysalis and the winged being. But here was no quiet or privacy of birth. All the world knew what moment was at hand and half the world, it seemed, wished to lend a rough hand to hasten the coming forth and to determine what manner of being was to be born.

It was the twenty-ninth of March. Tomorrow would be held the election of delegates to a convention to frame a constitution for the projected state. Territorial Governor Reeder had named the day. It was the first step within the state toward forming its organization, though in talk all over the country all plans had been long made. No campaigning of candidates for office had preceded this election. Little was asked or heard of rival claims or personal merits. One great fundamental question determined everything. Did a man want Kansas organized as a slave state or did he not? The line of division was simple. Every man's position on it was clearly known. Tomorrow would be taken the first step toward deciding the issue.

But—a thing that would have been strange in any other case but this—the excitement and preparation for this election went on chiefly outside of Kansas. Over on the other side of the river in a neighboring state men assembled and laid plans and waited for the day. In Kansas, settlers organized their precincts and chose their judges of election as they would have done in their eastern districts; they stopped on that and waited for the election.

John Truman was riding that day far from his piece of land and his newly built house. No business took him so far afield, or only the daily business of seeing always new views of the face of the prairie land and the wonder of the soft change on it as spring began to open. It had been late summer last year when he came to the country and the expectation of winter had lain already on the slopes of grass. Though he had lifted his mind daily to worship its open spaciousness and generosity of sweep, he had not yet seen it at its freshest and fairest. Through the weeks of the mild winter his eyes had grown happily used to the soft dried grass with gold and rose in its depths—and to day upon day of bright sunshine and clear rich blueness of sky such as New England winter had never shown him. But he always felt himself to be waiting for the real life of the prairie. The short bright winter had passed over it lightly and already on this late March day he looked upon gently returning greenness and newness. He rode slowly, his narrowed eyes making a lovely haze, an exquisite color mist, of the new life rising at the roots of the grasses.

He moved lingeringly along a hilltop from which he looked down into and across the Wakarusa Valley and over the broad level where the Wakarusa joined the yellow Kaw. This country had already found more of a poet in John Truman than he had ever known himself to be. Only an occasional cabin or farmstead dotted the gracious valley but like Cobbler Keezar he saw in it as he looked, home places and homes and happy lives fed sweetly and fully by those spacious acres. All the emotion of a born citizen, of a man who loved a state and its living, who loved a country, rose in him. To be at the beginning of a state seemed to him as he looked upon the spring in the valley, a high and great fortune. In this moment of rare and satisfying imagination his moral and political purpose in coming to the place slipped into the background. He had come here to make homes for other men possible, thinking little of a place for himself. But his thought had changed. Whatever was made permanent here he must have a lot in. Ellen was coming soon. They two must have a home here.

Down at the Wakarusa the mass of trees was darkened and thickened where the thread of prairie road crossed the stream. Beyond that the way leading down from the encircling hills was dotted more thickly than he had ever seen it, with comers on the westward road, horsemen and wagons both. He watched the mass at the crossing lengthen itself out into a broad moving line, like a busy migration. He sat and dwelt upon it a minute, still deep in his dream and making this a part of it. This was only an initial coming true of his vision and he waited, still watching this section of the westward moving. Suddenly his attitude and attention changed. He had been seeing this body only as set in the landscape and belonging to it. Now he looked at the caravan itself, near enough at length for him to surmise detail. This was no steady plodding orderly immigrant train, with eyes all fixed on distance and desire. The horsemen rode unassorted and spurred back and forth between van and rear; the wagons were crowded with men. There was no freight of household goods, no lagging herd of cattle. As the train drew nearer shouts and concerted laughter rose faintly to the hilltop—a shot—a whimsical jeering volley of shots.

John Truman turned his horse and urged it quickly across the prairie. The Missourians were coming! Lawrence, the little Free State settlement down by the river, must know! But even as he rode and looked at the moving caravan he saw another man leave a post of observation and gallop ahead of him, while a second signaled as he rode to some one stationed still beyond. He himself had not been in the village for two days and did not know what precautions had been taken. Others had plainly had definite expectations of what the election day was to bring. He waited to look back again, since others had hurried with the news.

Over the hill beyond the Wakarusa other wagons and men and still others came, until the whole way was full of them and he could not see the end of them over the hilltop. Hundreds of men there must be. He thought of the little tent-and-cabin village on the Kaw below him and urged his horse on. Rumors of this had been coming over the border

for weeks past—ever since Governor Reeder had set the date for this election, the first one of importance in this still unformed country. Men were organizing for defense of the old institution of slavery, an institution bound up, they thought, with their individual rights and with government rights. Bitter words had been said in public meetings and vehement urging to action spoken. Up in Saint Joseph, on the Missouri side, General Atchison had urged the body of men listening to him, "I advise you, one and all, to enter every election district in Kansas, in defiance of Reeder and his vile myrmidons, and vote at the point of the bowie-knife and revolver."

The bowie-knife and revolver had come.

The day after the election John Truman tried to recall distinctly all that occurred from the time when he drove his horse urgently across the prairie until the Missourians broke camp and stridently and jeeringly went back by the way they had come, leaving taunts and menaces in their train. He remembered the moment when the full insult and outrage—insult on the scale of a state—came upon him and, alone on the prairie, he broke into an anger he had never known before. He recalled speaking aloud out there in his solitude, words stronger than had ever before been on his lips. All his reverence for law, his pride in safe and reasonable government, were suddenly outraged and desecrated beyond his bearing.

As he looked back two days later on the hours that had intervened, he seemed to be looking into a haze of anger in which all the ugly events of the day were set. He knew he had stood in white silence while the men of Lawrence took calm counsel together and urged upon each other, not only non-resistance but non-provocation. He recalled the loud-mouthed blasphemous camp, broken up at last into sections to supply voters to other districts; the crowded and desecrated voting-place in the morning and the deposed and ejected judges of election; the boisterous farce of voting, with all forms cast contemptuously aside; the flourished knives and wantonly discharged guns; the oaths and ribald talk; at last the silent body of Lawrence men going

quietly to vote in the late afternoon, the withdrawing Missourians shouting profane taunts and derision. Deep in John Truman's New England soul was a reverence for the ballot, a reverence conceived first in the aspiration and struggle of other generations and made greater in him because of that. The vote was to him a symbol of deepest significance. He had seen vaguely through the day that the quiet anti-slavery men kept cautious watch on each other, to assist the control of all. Some instinct of his own, a fear of his own unaccustomed anger, helped also to keep him apart.

One moment stood out clearly from the mist of feeling. He was coming up from the ferry in the afternoon when some more concentrated commotion than usual drew him near the crowd, where the shouting seemed for once to have some sort of object. A Free State man had tried to make his way to the polls and had been laid hold of, but just as Truman approached he broke away and ran toward the river, followed by shots and pursuing men and by such shouts and cries as would encourage hounds in chase. Truman recognized the fleeing man as a neighbor and his own unaccustomed hands were impulsively raising his weapon on the pursuer, now close upon himself. But instead he dropped the butt of it to the ground just before the man, who tripped, took two or three headlong stumbling strides and fell. His pistol, cocked and ready, was discharged, the bullet going through the thumb of his left hand.

The man rose furious with pain and anger, calling upon his fellows to shoot the damned Yankee. But the episode rather tickled the holiday humor of the crowd than irritated it, and they jeered noisily at his embarrassment. John Truman stood and watched them, a little warmed by this momentary satisfaction to his anger. Doctor Robinson, recognized leader in the settlement and representative of the New England Emigration Society, coming up from behind, put a hand on his shoulder.

"Come back here to the *Free State* office," he said. "Miller and some of the others are there." He looked after the wounded man with a little serious concern on his

face. "That man's name is Jim North," he said. "He may want you to remember it. He lives out southeast somewhere."

They passed around a new little shag house—one of the curious roofhouses with eaves resting on the ground—and turned the corner of a shed against which rested a loose pile of empty boxes. Behind them knelt a man, the muzzle of his gun in a crevice between boxes. It was pointed awkwardly toward a distant group of Missourians and the man's hand was on the trigger, but his head was bowed over it supplicatingly. "Is it time, Lord—is it time?" Doctor Robinson's quick grasp removed his hand from the hammer and brought him to his feet, and John saw the lined and mourning face of Amos Wright, his own townsman.

"Wright," said Doctor Robinson quietly, "this is not the day for that."

Amos looked steadily at them, the perplexed and reluctant expression on his face clearing away a little. Then he reached for his musket and took it again clumsily.

"We'll wait the Lord's day," he said, and turned away.

"We will that or we'll be eternally blown up," said Done Riley, who had sauntered up to join them. "This don't look like the Lord's day to me."

"This is the day that prayers are said backward," said Roger Stivers.

Truman could not take on the grim humor of these men. He looked past Riley and saw a woman open the door of a cabin a little and look out anxiously, until some hand behind her closed the door. He thought of Ellen. She would soon be on her way to this place.

The next morning he watched again from the hilltop and saw the last of the wagons from the camp move eastward to the Wakarusa crossing. They went more quietly than they had come—like the dull ending of a grisly and uproarious picnic. John saw them distorted, through the anger that still possessed him.

Was this then the beginning of the fight? And what kind of fight would it be?

Six thousand three hundred and seven votes were cast in Kansas that day. Less than three thousand men lived within its borders. In all the territory but one anti-slavery delegate was elected.

III

ELLEN TRUMAN sat on the meager deck of a river-boat and watched the golden Missouri slide past. For hours she had looked with fascinated eyes upon this—to her—wonder of streams, her interest always returning from the wooded banks or sandy bluffs or black-soiled farms moving slowly past, to the opaque water-floor beneath.

"Is it water or is it not?" she asked softly for the third time, picturing the clear streams of her native state.

"It runs," said a gentleman standing near, "but that is the only proof it can show. Look out, sonny!" he exclaimed to the small Matthew Truman, at this moment drawing himself up on the rail and leaning far over in his constant hope of seeing what manner of fish abode in these waters. "Better not fall in," he went on in his soft undisturbed voice, "it would be too hard to pry you out again. That's an old joke out here," he added apologetically to Matthew's mother.

Mrs. Truman waved her son to her side with a motherly hand and continued to look at the river. "Anyway, it is beautiful," she said, her eyes on the soft browns and hidden yellow of the stream and the gold lights where the sun fell upon it. "Most water you look through, but this has a soft lovely surface of its own."

"Let me thank you, ma'am," said the stranger, lifting his soft hat with a little exaggeration. "It is the first time I ever heard the river of my state called beautiful. The language usually applied to it comes from another part of the dictionary—a part that ladies use less."

"Looks to me like the last end of the washin'," said a heavy woman sitting near them on the end of an upright keg of nails, "after the socks and everythin' else a-bin through," she added to make her figure entirely explicit.

Mrs. Truman turned a look of pleasant inquiry upon her

and examined her with the live interest she was applying to everything she saw. The woman spoke with a southern tongue but one very different from the man's, a tongue thickened and slack, which left sounds undefined or omitted them in slovenly indolence. She wore a coarse blue calico dress and a sunbonnet lay in the broad hollow of her lap, although the early April sun did not seem to require one. Mrs. Truman's gaze inquired into her and her standing and made comparison. In her own section of country a woman with hard hands and coarse dress and untrained tongue would have shown also marks of her submission to circumstances, of living under over-riding conditions. She would have been thin and worn and borne an air of facing the further hardness of life with trepidation. At the same time she would have tried to wear in her manner a bit of fineness which would be her form of self-respect.

This woman had evidently joined hands with circumstances and made them tolerable to herself by making her demands easy. She was as broad of face as she was of foot and hand. The mere wind and weather of life had left more mark upon her than its cares and its pathos had. Ellen, looking for classes and types in this new country rather than for mere persons, appraised her dubiously.

"How fur you-all goin' on the river?" she asked without hesitation. The southern gentleman looked aside a little with the air of having no part in the asking, but he did not move away.

"We get off at Kansas City landing," said Ellen readily.

"Goin' to stop there or goin' out on the perraira?"

"Going out on the prairie," said Ellen, with a vividness that was for herself and not for any hearer. The phrase still had a wonder in it for her, as if she said "going out on a cloud" or "moving into the sunset" or something of that golden kind.

The woman's black eyes narrowed and she looked Mrs. Truman over sharply. The southern gentleman also turned his pleasant gaze upon her again with less of admiration this time than of thoughtful curiosity.

"The perraira's all right for them that wants it," said the woman at last with a coarse unfriendliness in her tone.

"Isn't it very beautiful?" asked Mrs. Truman quickly, making no recognition of the evident antagonism.

"Just grass," said the woman, rising abruptly and moving off along the deck with a broad rolling gait. She paused a few feet away to drop over her shoulder a laconic, "I live in Weston," as if that indicated a relation which Mrs. Truman or anyone else should understand, and passed heavily on to the other side of the boat.

Ellen watched her broad back meditatively—she had found something new to consider in every hour of this trip—and then turning found the southerner viewing her with mingled elements of inquiry in his pleasant expression.

"Where is Weston?" she asked him. "I spent many hours on western geography before we started but I can't recall anything of that name."

"Weston, madam, is on up the river above Leavenworth, on the Missouri side." He seemed ready to add something else but stopped and looked at her a little quizzically. "I come from Platte County myself," he said.

County divisions had not been much taken account of in Ellen's state, and the name suggested no response to her. So she merely caressed her son's quiet shoulders and smiled over the rich color of the willows on the bank, beside which the little boat nosed cautiously along seeking for depths of channel.

"Isn't it lovely?" she said. "See the lovely color, darling, where the willows turn bright toward the top. The pussies are out, just the way they will be at home before long."

"And thousands of whistles, sonny," said the man. "There are not many ladies and children out on the prairie yet, madam," he added tentatively.

Ellen felt a little touch of disapproval of her presence as well as desire for information, under his courteous manner.

'There will have to be women and children if it is ever to grow into a country," she answered.

"It doesn't seem right to do it at their expense," he said gravely.

"They have a right to the cost as well as to the result," said Ellen with a little spirit.

He gave another glance at her prettiness of dress, at her quick charm of manner, even while she laid care-taking hands on the small Matthew or turned her head to see that Owen was still under care of Harvey at the bow of the boat, at the vivid expectancy of interest that marked her attitude. "That's not the way we think of women down here," he answered gravely.

Ellen recalled the heavy-footed one who had just left them and considered the uses to which she might be put.

"I suppose you are going out to Lawrence—or Manhattan?" he went on, but in a manner that made curiosity seem to be merely a courteous and admiring interest.

"To Lawrence," answered Mrs. Truman.

"It's mighty pretty out there," he said, and lifted his hat and moved away. In spite of his deference of manner Ellen felt that he carried away beneath it something related to the same animus that had sent the black-eyed woman rolling off up the deck.

This was the eleventh day of her journey. When John went out the autumn before he had intended to come back for her when he had taken his land and built some kind of dwelling on it—"Not too good a one, mind," Ellen had warned him. "I want the full flavor of this pioneering." John had smiled a little grimly and made easy promise. But when the spring opened he found, he said, that the brief season between New England winter and Kansas summer would not allow his absence for so long. He mentioned no other reason. He would send Harvey, who had not yet settled to any employment that laid imperative hands on his time. Ellen had said nonsense—she would come alone with her eldest son and her second son to protect her. Harvey might meet her in St. Louis, but not a step farther east. She was almost packed up already.

In truth she did not want the careful questioning eye of John or even the friendly curiosity of Harvey asking her how much feeling lay behind her goodbyes or in her

preparations for departing, or whether at any moment she had to call upon courage to set her on her way. She packed her goods, selecting or discarding or postponing, making adventure wait for the moment upon practicality and romance upon plain sense, the same dull color the world over. Novelty and high enterprise halted just across the horizon, but she withheld her eyes from them while she determined sober questions of food and clothing and remedies and furnishings, and all provisions for the wants which would go sternly on in the new country as they had in the old, but with the sources of satisfying them far away. She gave hours to studying her task and rose in the night to make note of suddenly suggested needs. And all the time she was laying restraining hand upon her anticipations and saying to them, "In a minute—in a minute!"

The minute was at hand, it seemed, when under Harvey's rather casual guidance they boarded the Missouri river boat at St. Louis and began to see a life of which the train and the Cincinnati boat had given them but limited glimpses. The steamer seemed to be not merely a means of transportation but a piece of the life of a new land, moving slowly and dramatically along between its river-banks. The passengers were either of the land or on their way to enter it. Traders and planters along the river-valley embarked or disembarked at successive river-towns, sloping from distant pillared and many-windowed southern houses down through humbler homes and little stores and shops to a rude dock sending green-moulded piles down into the mud of the bank. Speculators and home-seekers settled down for the length of the trip and sought entertainment up and down the little deck or in the crowded cabin. Immigrants, alone or in groups or families, watched with inquiring eyes, pleased or dubious, every phenomenon they passed.

As days went on and passengers were sifted out until it became clear which ones were going through to Westport or Leavenworth, Ellen became aware of an attitude of careful observation growing steadily more perceptible among the men on board. Talk in the cabin or down the deck

would become suddenly louder and then end in sullen quiet or in a blustery threat, or challenge. Such talk was usually apart from the few women on board and Ellen noticed that if she approached such a conversation in her espionage of the active young Matthew, some man would put a quieting word upon it and then very likely turn to her with a politely-phrased offer of assistance. Once as she beckoned Matthew out of a group and led him away she overheard a man say, "What fool would take a woman like that out into that infernal mess?"

"Mother," said Matthew as she set about contriving occupation for him, "are we damned New Englanders?"

"We're New Englanders, dear, but that word is—subjective. We don't use it."

"I thought the man meant us. Are we God-damned abolitionists?" His baby tongue said the words with difficulty.

"Matthew! You *must* stay near mother!" She put a protecting arm about him and turned an apprehensive eye upon Owen. Matthew kept his large inquiring gaze still upon her. "We're one kind but not that kind. Only angry men use that word."

A lean roughly-dressed man slouching over the rail near her suddenly turned an ugly tobacco-marked face toward her. She had thought him inattentive. "You'll find they ain't ary other kind out there, ma'am. And you'll find some other things too, ma'am, before you're through, ma'am." He spat fiercely over the rail and slouched away.

"That man could have said 'God-damn'. He was angry enough," said Matthew thoughtfully.

"He spits the color of the river," said Owen, whose little mind dwelt on detail.

"Oh, my boys!" cried Ellen to herself, as she tightened her arms about them. It was the first breath of real trepidation she had drawn. "But they'll be away from such men as this," she immediately assured herself. And she pointed out the big strange bird that looked like the pelican in the book and might be a pelican if they only knew. A neighborly old man who had sauntered up near them assured them that it was a pelican, that they might see a peli-

can every once in a while—or once in a spring—if they knew when and where to look for it. And he went on to tell the boys what seemed like wonderful things about the wild ducks and wild geese that flew north and the prairie chickens that in the winter could be caught in traps and eaten. "Are you taking them to Kansas, ma'am?" he asked presently, and nodded approvingly though soberly and gave her the appraising glance which she discovered always followed her answer.

The old man returned to the entertainment of the boys by means of Indian and California tales. A tall slender-faced young man in loosely-hanging overcoat, approached her from the other side. He was a man she had seen but a few times on board, though she knew that he had embarked at St. Louis and that Harvey had some Kansas acquaintance with him. He had been stretched on a bench near when the angry man had spoken to her and had sprung up and moved a little closer and remained tentatively near until the bully was out of sight. Now he approached respectfully to address her.

"I hope you have not been seriously annoyed, Mrs. Truman," he said, and added, "I am Lewis Hardie, sometimes of Lawrence, and I know your husband very well. He told me that you would be on this boat and I had hoped to be of service to you, if there was opportunity for it. But unfortunately for me I have spent the most of the time downstairs trying to shake the boat to pieces—setting up a counter-vibration to the engine."

Ellen examined him with quiet eagerness as he explained himself and she responded. Here was a real Kansas settler, the first she had seen. She did not doubt, as she considered him and scrutinized his lean tired face, that he was a friend of John. John was never one to make unique or dramatic quality in a man a basis of friendship, as she sometimes impulsively did. "If John likes a man you know he's solid as the Statehouse," Harvey had said lightly and a little scornfully of some of John's friends, too sober for his young taste. Ellen could not question a fundamental solidity of purpose in this man, though his manner now might have fitted an introduction in the lightest circum-

stances rather than what might be considered a solemn moment at the gateway of a wild new world. He asked details of her journey with an air of solicitude and responsibility but continued to make careless jokes about the prevalent ague and his own tiresome case. Lines lay in his thin cheeks, ready at any moment to deepen into folds of laughter, and his blue eyes, narrowed to a thin angle at the outer corners where his eyebrows sloped down sharply, seemed waiting to surprise a cause for mirth. Yet while he presented a light surface for intercourse he seemed less a man given to laughing than to helping others to material for laughter.

And in him too, Ellen detected that attitude of appraisement, of suspending judgment regarding her. She had to restrain herself from asking pertly, "Well, will I do?" Instead she inquired if he too had taken land.

"Well, no," he said, "I haven't the making of a squire in me. I just observe the situation and when found make a note of it." He paused as if taking a second thought over assuming her knowledge of Dickens's new works and Captain Cuttle's phrasing, and added, "I'm a correspondent for a New York paper."

"Oh," cried Ellen, "one of those!"

"Yes—those," he answered with a laugh. "It sounds more Biblical than it is." The correspondence from Kansas to the eastern papers was widely known. Many readers, like Ellen, followed it eagerly. "I was sent out with the same Emigrant Society party that John came out with. We use first names a good deal out there," he explained apologetically.

"I expect to find you all brothers."

"Some brothers, some step-brothers."

"Where is Platte County?" asked Ellen suddenly, catching sight of the tall pleasant southerner again a little distance away.

"It is up along the river opposite Leavenworth. A large proportion of our non-resident voters and our volunteer militia come from there."

"That gentleman over there said he was from Platte County."

"Yes, that is Horace Evans from over beyond Leavenworth. I saw him over voting last month. He brought a party over."

"A man like that!" exclaimed Mrs. Truman. "Why, he seems quite decent."

Hardie laughed. "Your first lesson will be a catholic tolerance, Mrs. Truman. A man's voting-place may not be a matter of good or bad manners. Perhaps not of morals or principle either, from one point of view. Some reasonably good Missourians have lately taken a pleasant little fancy for voting in Kansas. They are more likely to be of a different class though."

He was watching a little group of rough men some feet away from them who were talking among themselves in manner now boisterous, now covert. Harvey approached them at this moment and the same man that had spoken offensively to Mrs. Truman moved out into his path with an unpleasant stare and gesture. Harvey gave him a brightly challenging look and walked around him. Another man said something sneering, of which Mrs. Truman heard only an insulting "Yankee." Harvey stopped and turned sharply upon them. Then he caught sight of Hardie and Mrs. Truman and with a light mocking gesture, more insolent than words could have been, he passed on around the group to join them.

"You're not a soothing person, my son," said Hardie, a little reproof under his lightness. "Don't you know that you are the guardian of our peace?"

Harvey laughed.

"You are missing the show over here on the other side of the boat and I had to come to tell you. They're 'walking' a boat over a sand-bar and you never saw anything like it."

He led them over to the other side of the deck whence they could see the curious sight of a small steamer that had been hoisted from the water by throwing out long sweeping spars and now was being slowly lifted step by step across the obstructing sand-bar.

"Doesn't it just look like a big walking grasshopper?" cried Ellen.

"You see how many exotic interests we have to show you," said Hardie, "both social and economic."

"I wouldn't miss one of them," answered Ellen fervently.

Late in a lovely April afternoon the boat felt its way up to the dock at the landing known to later comers as Kansas City. The arrival of the sober hardworking little steamer was an event for both passengers and landing. Ellen Truman with her boys, attended by Harvey and Hardie, had been at the front rail ever since the first building came into view, possessing herself of every element of the place. Along the bluff-backed shore, the row of warehouses and offices faced the river. Hardie pointed out the Spanish signs to her and she caught her breath in an accession of excitement at this strangeness in America. This was indeed a new land. Its novelty made the sight of it an adventure in itself.

"It is not a golden door to the promised land," said Hardie apologetically.

"The golden path comes later," she said. "I won't have it excused to me." She felt Hardie's inquiring eyes upon her again, but with growing satisfaction in the look.

The dock and the bank above it held many men, scattered negroes waited in the background, a few Indians showed brown faces apart, on the street above one or two carriages stood, evidently from the plantations to the south of the river. Each boat-landing might mean some addition to the life of the place.

Quiet as the waiting scene was, this was for Ellen Truman the most palpitant moment she had ever known, as she one instant collected impressions of all this with her eager eyes and the next looked with other eagerness for John. To miss nothing in the scene, to keep watch of her boys, to oversee Harvey's oversight of her possessions, to examine John's distant face and not lose the moment when he should first see her, to note all the variety and attitude of those about her—this was really using all of her. She had no fault to find with the new life.

IV

AT the top of the hill John Truman pulled silently on the lines and his horses stopped. The south wind smoothed the grass spread before them. Down in the hollows the deeper slough-grass gleamed, as the sun struck its curved glossy blades. Tender untrod green followed the rise and descent of the gently-moving hills. Early spring flowers enriched it wherever it spread. Unfenced, almost untraveled, the prairie lay before them.

For months prairie had been a magical word to Ellen Truman, rousing quick desire and hope of ecstasy. A green country, unfarmed, unhoused, unfenced—it seemed that only a dream could hold it. Through the first miles of this home-coming drive, away from Westport and across the partly settled country near it, John had held her attention in talk or care of the boys, or had pointed out only matters of fact. He wanted a great single moment for her. Then, still telling the dramatic story of the recent election, or as much of it as he wished her to know at once, he turned the horses upon a detour he had found for himself on an earlier day.

Ellen caught his arm in an ecstasy which she thus asked him to share. No dream had told her of the living beauty of this. A piece of creation, unhandled, unused, a thing man had not made his own in any way, lay before their eyes. All they had known ere this seemed cut off behind them and this gift of God offered itself before them. It seemed the very moment of a beginning. All the aspiration and high purpose and sacrifice which had brought them to this minute seemed too little for the greatness of it. Ellen's eyes, used to sharply-outlined New England, followed the soft rise and fall of the hills and noted the deepening of green where one slope gently met another.

The tender spring green, warm and gold-touched in the sunlight, was not a color but life itself.

Ellen looked, her spirit lifted and stimulated. The thirty-six hours they had spent at the landing had, in spite of all her eagerness and confidence, held something of disquiet. At the Free State hotel many a friendly word had been said to her by comers and goers; but business had led them to other places as well and in some she had seen coldness and suspicion and in others a covert sneer. Nor was that all she saw. Only a few yards from the hotel door, where she had paused for a moment, two men met with oaths such as had never reached her ear before, and a drawn pistol on each side. But the pleasant southerner of the steamboat who was coming idly past, apparently undisturbed by the scene, had caught sight of her and turned abruptly to interfere, with an air of authority, and send the men and their quarrel and their pistols away to another section.

Ellen was rather embarrassed by a chivalry that took so much for granted in her. In fact she had been tasting the sight with reflective interest and eagerly finding its flavor. This frank and full expression of hostility was a part of the readiness and openness of this new life, she thought, and she hardly found in it the brutality that should have shocked her. Mr. Evans, however, came forward to remove the impression of the scene by means of his implied solicitude for her comfort in the village and her liking of the place.

Before he turned away he asked, "Can you shoot?"

"Not having been a hunter I have not had reason to learn," said Ellen, laughing.

"You had better learn out here. There is something to hunt. All women here should learn to shoot," he added with serious urgency.

Ellen herself felt a momentary seriousness of a kind she had not felt before. But it passed when John came along with the boys to take her to see the setting out of a long train on the Santa Fe trail. Ellen felt as if she were reaching out to the experience of the ends of the earth when the far-distant names of California and Santa Fe

were suddenly brought near. And the long trains of coupled mules and the huge broad-bedded dark wagons were strange enough to belong to another land. Even the mule seemed all at once to have become another creature, with a unique mission and adventure of his own.

"Think what those mules will see before they get back!" she exclaimed, watching the long train set into plodding motion, while the assembled crowd cheered it off. "Don't you wish you were going to California?" she asked of Hardie.

"I've been there. For excitement it is slow beside Kansas."

"And there is something to do in Kansas which there is not in California," said a firm-lipped Scotchman who had joined them. His name was Fraser and he was known to John and Hardie—a man definitely outlined and clear of purpose evidently. They listened to his words with friendly respect. He closed his remark tightly, his eyes fixed on a man some yards away, a man who walked with a loose swagger and seemed to scatter his words with extravagant bluster.

"There is the man of wrath," said Hardie lightly.

Ellen's look questioned him. "He is the postmaster here at Westport," he explained, "a soul of high emprise, slightly veiled in the name of Jones. He aspires to be our sheriff."

"Does he live in Lawrence?"

"By no means. He lives where the voters live, on this side of the line. It's a unique arrangement but convenient. He will bring his crimes with him when he comes over to make an arrest."

The other men listened grimly to his persiflage and Ellen examined a look she had never seen on her husband's face before, a sternness and acrid purpose which nothing in their life hitherto had ever called there. He was watching the group of men to whom Jones was talking.

"Know them?" asked Hardie.

John nodded. "Same lot," he said. Then he looked down on his boys who were holding his hands and his look vanished and he took them joyfully away to see their

own ox-drawn wagons of freight start off into the prairie. Harvey went to get his new horse which had been sent up from St. Louis and Hardie took Ellen higher up on the bluff-side that she might look across the river into the spacious Missouri lowlands and up the river Leavenworth way.

"Did you ever see so much of the Lord's doings at once?" he asked.

Ellen could not answer immediately. Her eyes had turned misty and her lips would not move at control. All her sensitiveness to beauty seemed risen into emotion, sharp and exquisite. She looked far across the gracious levels north of the river, merging into rolling uplands where they met the fine blue sky; and along the river-side to the left, where the sharp-angled and creased bluffs grandly defined the river-bed; and at the river itself, where it swept around in a great elbow, with a gleam richer than a more limpid stream could return.

"I hardly feel worthy to enter this," she said. "It is beyond any right."

Hardie led her from point to point to see new outlines or new shades of richness. Under his humor he hid a lyric love of the new country. As they came around a curve in their path they looked down into the westward-turning road, along which California trains took their departure, "Either to gold directly or to Kansas," said Hardie. Below them, not far away, a little group of wagons had stopped. "They go to Kansas or there would be more of them," he explained.

Trouble had overtaken them early, for men went from wagon to wagon and worked at gearings and axles. As they looked and Ellen grasped the scene and added her imagination to it, Harvey came riding gallantly up gaily trying the paces of his new possession. He stopped and was immediately off his horse and apparently inquiring into causes and offering a friendly hand. The customs of a new world suited Harvey's social temper. They saw him presently help a woman from one of the wagons and make a comfortable place for her by the steep roadside and then return to assist a girl who stepped out lightly,

not to rest but to stand and look across the landscape with shaded eyes and then lift her head to examine the bluffs above her. Harvey lent his six months of travel experience to the men, but had time to turn often to the girl with careful gesture or speech.

Ellen and Hardie watched the little by-scene for a few minutes, set as it was against the larger adventure of the moving family. In a few minutes the party was on its way once more. Harvey helped the girl into place again. Even at their distance they could see her little gesture of farewell, demure and modest yet tentative of further acquaintance.

"Harvey'll probably see her again," said Hardie, as the boy mounted and dashed on his way. "He told me yesterday that there were only three girls in Douglas county. He thinks the Emigration Society ought to do something about it."

But to Ellen's eyes the little shadow of wayside romance was more than a jest. It enriched this land of great adventure to think that the little idylls of everyday living were also to be added to it.

All these things made a variegated fabric in the background of her mind today as she looked across the green hills beyond which her new home was to lie. With all these hints of adventure in yesterday and all this adorable beauty in today and assured for all days to come, life promised greatly indeed.

"The green newness and the great emptiness of it!" she cried. "It makes you want to write something on it."

"Please God, we'll be among those that will," said John quietly.

They turned back into the road again. But all the way—until they reached the Wakarusa ford and then the little group of rude houses known as Lawrence, and a mile farther their own new house—was to Ellen a path of happy promise. And John in his satisfaction forgot the presage that was in his heart.

V

ELLEN TRUMAN from her doorway surveyed her medley household with whimsical detachment, on a summer afternoon. She had ridden up and dismounted at the doorstep and still held her bridle-rein in a backward hand. It was later than she had intended her return to be and her phalanstery, as Hardie called it, was uneasily bestirring itself in a belated sense that at this time of day there must be domestic duties awaiting, on the performance of which its own comfort would eventually depend. Out in the rude kitchen Phœbe Murray was looking appraisingly into the shallow depths of a pine cupboard and evidently measuring its contents against her own abilities. Lewis Hardie was standing behind her and looking over her smooth dark head with an assumption of humorous calculation. Harvey, who had been hovering in the background with emphasized interest, sprang forward to take Ellen's horse and then to hand it over easily to the two little boys who guided it importantly to the stable. Amos Wright looked up from his papers with a quick tender smile, and a half-sick youth on a cot under the east window turned his languid eyes from the landscape and propped his head higher in the pillows expectantly.

"I'm glad you are all here," said Ellen, as she quickly removed her make-shift riding-gear. She found her eastern habit too formal for her frequent useful rides.

"Yes, we are all here, for a wonder," said Hardie. "I was able to stay for supper fortunately. If there is going to be any supper," he added. "Miss Murray is not so positive about it as I should like to see her."

"I think if you are going to start a Brook Farm in Kansas you should have Brook Farm rations," said Phœbe Murray. "Simple food when your mind is on the state of the nation."

"Nobody but me knows what we are going to have for

supper," said Ellen gaily. "We got a box through Westport last night and there's to be a surprise. I'll trouble you Yankees for the kitchen, please."

But first she stopped to touch and tend the impatiently-waiting sick boy and to set Amos Wright upon cares for him—Amos who never discovered any household task for himself but who responded with such gentle alacrity when one was suggested to him.

The accumulation of a household had been rapid. "With my staff and my crook I passed over the brook, and now I'm divided in bands," Ellen had quoted gaily at the end of a month, looking over her assemblage.

"That is to say," said Hardie, "with John, Matt and Owen you passed over the Wakarusa and now—here we are."

First Harvey was to be rescued from his come-and-go life down in the village and given what comfort and regularity was possible and an eye to the fluctuations of his cough. Then John had brought out Amos one day and with a quiet compelling air established him on another cot in the unfinished section of the up-stairs. Amos helped John about the place and sometimes went down to work in the village, and rode thoughtfully abroad to great distances, and sat much at home reading papers and writing, and puzzling Ellen greatly as to the reasons for his presence here. He had taken up no land as most men did, nor set himself about gainful occupations.

"He has a general air of waiting for the Judgment Day," she said to John.

"I suspect he regards that as an occupation," said John dubiously. And he watched Amos and his waiting.

The spring was almost into summer when Phœbe Murray's letter came, saying that on the very heels of it, almost in the same envelope in fact, she would arrive at the Westport landing, and would her cousin John please meet her there.

"Well, my word!" John exclaimed as he read, and "My word!" as he went on, until Ellen came and put her head beside his, to read also the cause of his excitement.

"My word!" she said in mimicry of him and then no more until she had finished reading. John laid the letter down and stared at Ellen in such perturbation that she burst into a laugh.

"What on earth does a girl like that want to come away out here for?" he demanded. "There is nothing at all here that she is used to!"

"That is just the reason," said Ellen promptly. "Of course she wants to come out here."

"Ellen!" said John with a little impatience. "You've lost perspective on this thing. This isn't for everyone to do. People shouldn't come out here for curiosity or merely for a sensation. And for a girl!—Phœbe doesn't know what she is about."

"Did you ever see Phœbe Murray when she didn't know what she was about? She has counted it all up, you may be sure. Phœbe got all of your great-grandfather that went into the Murray family."

"She must have got a wrong impression somehow," John persisted, looking the letter over again.

"Not from my accounts, sir. I've never clothed our cornbread and straw beds with romance, for her. No, Phœbe is just tired of her featherbeds and flutings. I saw plain envy in her eye when I said goodbye to her. Cousin Mary is such a face-washed tabby in a High Church pew."

Lewis Hardie, entering, burst into a laugh. "If I had your rich gift in tropes, Mrs. Truman! The plain columns of a mere newspaper would not hold me."

"You may need all I can spare," said Ellen. "What do you say to our adding a young lady to our household?"

"No!"—exclaimed Hardie with prompt seriousness. "Can't you put her off?"

"You speak as if she were a Sunday visitor. No—she has found someone to travel with and is already on her way and more."

"But a young lady!" Hardie objected. "If she were a strong-backed laundress now, the colony would welcome her with acclaim. To be sure," he added, smiling. "There

is a warm reception awaiting any young lady also. Harvey isn't the only one to perceive a social lack here."

"Phœbe will not be an amusement." Ellen caught him up a little sharply.

"Not an amusement—a pleasure," he corrected himself gravely. "Life here needs a little of the grace she can add." But his eyes drew into their sharp angle at the outer corners. "Is she a secretary of the local A. A. S.?" he asked. "Of a free spirit seeking adventure—a member of Somebody's Monday Morning classes?"

"You'll have to wait and see," Ellen retorted, a little nettled. "But she won't be like that Ohio girl that came out and went back home in a week. Wait until you see her. John!—Just think what the Murrays and their little corner of the world are saying about it!"

"Oh, Phœbe has found some way to make it plausible. She never leaves a to-do in her wake, no matter what she is setting about," John answered with a smile which held real affection for the girl under discussion.

"Well, I'm glad she's coming," Ellen mused. "John, isn't there lumber enough to run up that new partition today so that I can get a corner ready for her to have for herself?"

Within a week Phœbe came. Hardie looked at her and in one instant cast aside the two alternative pictures he had formed—one of a stern-browed priestess with enforcing eye, the other of a damsel out on jaunty adventuring. This Phœbe had straight level gray eyes under slender level brows. She looked at him and he mustered the best of his manner and himself to meet her regard. Yet he wondered that gray eyes and level dark brows and smooth dark hair could seem to give so much color to a face. Phœbe was pale—or rather of a clear fairness—and yet the richness of the deep gray eyes and the contrast of the dark hair seemed to give color and brightness enough. Even Ellen's quick blue glance and alert come and go of color did not seem more vivid than her whiteness and quietness. One's first thought on meeting those considering, inquiring eyes was, "I wonder what she will think of

me''; his second thought, ''I hope she will think well of me.''

''My heavens! What a girl—a woman!'' Lewis Hardie said to himself as he rode back to the village that night. He was still a little impatient at her coming and its incongruity. Yet as he thought of her quiet readiness of spirit and her eye open to all conditions and eagerly watchful of them, he could not call her presence incongruous. He loved at sight her prettiness of dress—one missed that rest to the eye out here—and her charm of manner, like Ellen's, was soothing to a spirit that had inured itself reluctantly to the ungracious bluntness of border life. His last thought of her as he entered the village was a little sigh of content at her coming and the presence of a new—though inappropriate—element of life.

Lewis Hardie had before this annexed himself to the Truman household by insidious degrees, first helping the family to settle, with much prairie-sophisticated lore and a facile hand, inviting himself to odd meals, discovering the convenience of staying all night after he had stayed to supper, at last finding the best place to write his newspaper letters the corner of the Truman sitting-room, where anyone of the household was welcome to interrupt him. He seemed to find the whole family necessary to him, from John down to Owen. Ellen was often glad to turn from John's quiet finality to his readiness for argument and his relaxing humor.

''You fit into this household like a down bolster,'' she said to him once laughing.

''That is what it is to have Covenanter ancestry,'' he answered gravely. ''It gives one the sinuousness and pliability you have noticed in me. Of course you New Englanders cannot compass this softness and warmth.''

But though occasion had not yet brought it into action before her, Ellen was aware from the first that his ready whimsicality and his pleasing outside qualities were only the clothing for purpose as firm and partizanship as fiery as his race ever had. And if there had been nothing else to establish him in her regard, his warm comprehending admiration of John would have been more than sufficient.

These were not the only members of the coagulated family. Newcomers or visitors in the settlement who found boarding in the village inadequate to their wants were offered make-shift hospitality at the Trumans'. Ellen found the usefulness she had planned beginning from the very outset. Almost every guest meant an amusing difficulty of some sort in the primitive housekeeping, and an amusing joyous expedient on Ellen's part. It seemed to her in those first weeks—when she stopped for conscious thought—that she must be establishing a memory which could at any later time be beckoned in to give color and delight to her dullest year. "I believe you think you are out on a honeymoon instead of a crusade," said Harvey looking at her lightheartedness with youthful criticism. "And just between us, I always thought the crusaders had a jolly good time," she answered, busily essaying some kitchen carpentry in John's absence.

John had taken the leisurely months of the autumn and winter before for building. Lumber was hard to obtain but a neighboring hillside had furnished stone, and Ellen had been surprised to find walls of the soft brownish-yellow of the native stone before her, instead of the flimsy shack she had expected. It looked almost manorial beside the tents and shag-houses of many. "Never mind," John laughed at her exclamation. "You will find enough things lacking to suit you. This is only a shell."

"But making a home out of it will be the most like creation *I* ever had!" Even John hardly understood at first the zest with which she took up the task and carried it off; and even his hospitable and generous soul hardly understood fully the joyousness with which from the first mealtime she offered their home to all the world. The interesting "samplers of Kansas" whom the summer weeks brought were not their only guests. Ellen was as ready to give herself as she was to give her home. Sickness came uninvited even to the free air and open life of the new country, and Ellen was scarcely settled when she began to ride abroad with doctoring bag on the horn of her side-saddle, going to sick man or woman, or oftenest to stricken child. Several times even in these few weeks she

had brought someone home for nursing, like the wistful boy on the couch now.

Today she had been five miles away, to a bare place where she had heard that a mother and child lay sick of fever. She told of them in sober tones when she presently gathered her household about the simple table.

"And they seem unbelievably poor, even for this country," she said, "not just doing without things, but pitifully and emptily poor. Harvey, you will take some things over there in the morning."

"Where are they from?" asked Hardie, seemingly with more than mere curiosity.

"I forgot to ask. I'm not used yet to having everybody from some other place. In Bristol everybody had always been there. But the man had been away from home several days and the nearest people didn't seem to know anything about them. I should have stayed all night. I must go back tomorrow."

"I think you'd better not," said Hardie abruptly, and then added apologetically and formally, "if you will pardon me for suggesting." Ellen looking at him and past him saw John also looking serious over the proposal.

"But their need—we'll have to bring her here then," Ellen protested, though at the same time her look inquired into the aspect of the two men. She found nothing in it to answer her, and turned her attention to the proper conclusion of her sons' meal and the selective diet of the young invalid. But after all supper affairs were over she joined John and Hardie where they leaned on a newly erected piece of fence, the work of Amos' hands, and watched the unveiled glory of the sunset.

"That woman is desperately sick," she began directly, "and the worse she is the worse the baby is. I really ought to be over there tonight," she added, disturbed and regretful.

"Did you find out anything about them?" asked John again.

"Nothing but her temperature and the fact that she can't feed her baby," said Ellen a little impatiently. "Oh

—the goose?" she added with a little laugh. "I don't know. She looks as if she might belong on the other side." "Right on the goose," or "Wrong on the goose," indicated locally a man's position regarding slavery. "But she is just as sick as if she were secretary of an abolition society. What do you mean?"

"We have suspicions about that woman's husband and brother-in-law," said John slowly.

And Hardie added, "If there is any viciousness planning just now they are in it—and leaving her and the child sick at home. It would be dangerous to get mixed up with them. They must have Missouri friends to look after them."

"We can't let common humanity depend on what party people belong to!" cried Ellen. "I can't believe in real danger from these men. Men like this are Americans after all. They bring their wives and children out here. We have been here three months now and nobody has even threatened us. They only want to scare us and get their will that way."

"Well," said John, his face suddenly clearing as he put his arm about her shoulders and wheeled her around to face the now soft-tinted west, "we will take a wagon over in the morning and get them. Maybe the man will have turned up in the meantime to take care of them himself."

"It almost seems as if you would rather have my room and bed than my company," said Hardie, "for Blue Lodgers at that! But I thought you came out here quite bloodthirsty, Mrs. Truman, ready to slay and devour border ruffians."

"Not quite. I thought we would fight if we had to. I shall enjoy having some scares and I shouldn't mind having some hairbreadth escapes to look back on when we are old," she confessed laughing. "But now that we are here, I can't believe there will ever be real fighting. It's too late in the world and in this country for that. We've been here all this spring and not a border ruffian has come near us."

The next morning in the bare little cabin, perched at the head of a draw in which a ragged shed-stable squatted

—the whole place more a mark of possession of the land than a provision for human comfort and protection—they found the woman a little better. But Ellen scarcely repressed a cry when she turned to the pale little baby on its crude cot. No trace of the man was to be seen. The woman mutely and wearily consented when Ellen proposed her removal. She acted as one who has loosened hold of all expectation. She raised a feebly tender hand for slight ministrations to the baby, but scarcely turned an interested glance on Ellen's preparations for herself. John and Hardie came from a cursory examination of the premises to prepare the wagon for her and to carry her out and secure as much comfort for her as such an ambulance could provide. Ellen took the quiet baby on her knee and they moved softly along the smooth road. For once Ellen had no eye for the prairie or its tender rise and fall of hillside.

They put the woman in their own room and bade her rest quietly. But the long afternoon Ellen spent with baths and tempered food for the baby, and soft poultices and tiny doses, until at last one of the few doctors of the country could be brought from the village. Her usually eager and joyous nursing was sobered, however, and she took up her resources solemnly and anxiously. In the bedroom the weakened mother rested, her responsibility eased.

John waked late that night, waiting for a coming he could not but expect, not knowing yet all the ways of this strange country. But no man came to ask for wife or child, or to demand why they were in his keeping.

He had not told Ellen that the man whose duties they were taking over was one whose grudge he had earned at election time a few months ago and who would probably be doubly angered to find himself in their debt.

VI

TWO days more saw the ending of the little life. The mother, her every perception dulled in the lassitude of fever and discouragement, had hardly been awake at all to the grief imminent. When at last Ellen knew that her ultimate resource had been used and that time held no hope, she took the little white sick body and laid it in the bed beside the mother, that she might discover by softened degrees the tragedy before her. The poor woman tried feebly to call some delight of recognition to the dull eyes or the pale little face, but failed. To Ellen, who hung above them in an agony of impotent solicitude, she said, "Don't feel so bad. You done all you could," and said no more but settled herself into dreary watching.

The whole promiscuous household moved softly outside the little room and thought deeply on ways for comfort or help. Hardie on his horse went off to make provision for as seemly a funeral as the resources of the new place would allow. Phœbe sacrificed from her own wardrobe and spent hours of the griefful day fashioning dainty grave-garments, that the mother, deprived of offices, might see the child beautiful at the last.

"What makes you be so good to us?" cried the woman when she saw the baby, more exquisite than it had ever been in life. She fingered the little garments with movements of poignant longing, and then again buried her face in her pillow. But she said no word of her absent husband.

They had to leave her behind the next day when they drove away to the little new cemetery on a neighboring hilltop, a sparsely-occupied graveyard on an upland with wide-commanding prospect. Someone with a love for the sky and the open world had first chosen the place for his dead, better satisfied to leave them there in so boldly commanding a place. A minister sojourning in the village had

kindly ridden out to read some simple forms. Ellen and Phœbe both dropped to their knees beside the grave, but while Phœbe prayed tenderly for the mother bereft, Ellen, shaken with her sympathetic cares of the last few days, added to her prayer, "O God, let me bring no one of mine here!" and moved close to John's side as they left the burial-spot. Hardie and Phœbe put into place the wooden headpiece which Harvey had lettered that morning, and left behind the poor little memorial to "Leile North, aged 1 year, 5 months, 7 days." It was Hardie who went gravely aside to gather a few wild verbenas and pale Bouncing Bets to lay on the tiny mound.

As they rounded the curve of their own hillside again, following the easiest line across the prairie, they saw horses and a wagon before the place and a man on horseback waiting beside them. John took firmer hold on his lines and quickened his horses' pace and Hardie, who was loitering a little behind them in a pensive musing not rare for him, galloped up alongside again.

The man at the roadside turned in his saddle and watched them. His hand slid up to his side as if automatically and then dropped again as he saw the women. But he kept cautious, suspicious eyes upon the party, under the curve of his limp weatherstained hat. At the door stood another man, a figure of threat, of truculence. And facing him from the doorway was Amos Wright, erect and earnestly rebuking.

John stopped his horses some yards from them. "You and Phœbe go around and go in at the back," he said gently to Ellen.

But she said, "It must be the husband. Let me speak to him."

"No!" cried John. But he added, "Better go in and see to her." And Hardie helped them down and they went.

"Give me my folks," the man at the door was demanding, "you damned interfering Yankees. What did you coop 'em up here for?"

"Your family have been sick," said Amos.

"Not too sick to stay home, I guess. Show 'em to me!"

John and Hardie both moved forward. Amos raised a solemn hand. "Your wife has been very low," he said, "and is still. Your baby—" He paused, hoping his words would fall on a stiller mood of the man, "—is dead."

The man at the road awkwardly took off his slouch hat for a moment and said a shocked oath to himself. Jim North halted his anger for a startled, bewildered minute. Then he raised his hard clenched fist and brought it down on the doorframe. "You did it," he cried. "You slave-saving thieves!" He went on with wild epithet and oath. The men stood quiet, not knowing how much of real grief might lie behind his outburst.

In the house Ellen and Phœbe Murray tried with concerted solicitous words to the wife to cover the rising voice outside. They had found her lying pallid and trembling, straining her ears for the sounds. Now as North's words as well as his voice reached her, she flung up her arms in a defensive gesture and shrank further down in the bed. Ellen, coming to lay a reassuring hand upon her, found her fainting away.

A few minutes later Ellen opened the door which Amos had now closed, and stepped out upon the scene in front. North still shook a threatening fist and cried insults loudly. John and the others still halted in an embarrassment of humanity. Ellen stopped on the doorstep before the house and spoke out clearly.

"Mr. North," she said, "will you please be quiet?" He stopped in the middle of a harsh phrase and stared at her with fierce blinking eyes. "Your wife is just coming out of a faint and you must not startle her any more. She has been very sick and she can't be moved today. I don't think you had better see her either, she is so weak. If you will come back in a week you will find her better, I think. If she needs you before that time we will let you know."

She stood on the little eminence of the doorstep and spoke with the air of directing a subordinate. North blinked up at her sullenly and then turned his sour glance aside. Ellen waited a moment and then said gently, "We

did everything we could to keep the baby for you. She was so very ill and they had no one to care for them at all."

North's attitude relaxed and he turned and slumped away toward his wagon. "Come back in a week," said Ellen with firm kindness, and waited in place until he was driving away. They all saw the man, before he passed out of sight, turn in his wagon and raise a menacing arm toward them and utter a shout of belligerence.

"You evidently didn't say enough, Mrs. Truman," said Hardie grimly.

The next day and certain following days a man rode to the door to inquire for the woman and at the end of the week the wagon appeared again. This time North brought no companion. He allowed John Truman to help the weak woman into place and Ellen and Phœbe to settle her at ease and add food and comforts for her return home, and said not a word. But before he drove off he leaned across his wife to shake a threatening whip-stock at the whole group and say, "I'll git even with you-all for this. You can't meddle in my affairs without hearing from me, I'll tell you now. You look out for me yet, I tell you, by God!" His coarse voice seemed to stay in the air after he had turned his back and settled his slouching shoulders and driven off.

"He seems to think he means what he says," said Hardie. But John Truman was silent.

"Think of that sick woman going off with him!" said Phœbe. She shivered a little at the thought of what horrors women know and went slowly away at the call of the boys. Ellen deliberately seated herself on the little platform doorstep.

"That man helped get some negroes over near the river and run them down south last week," she said.

"How did you know?" asked John, startled a little.

"Not because you told me," answered Ellen. But she added, "I put together things that his poor frightened wife said. John—you men might as well tell me whatever there is to know. I don't yet believe in real danger, but I ought to know what to expect as well as you."

"I haven't been concealing anything," said John with a smile. He told her all there was to know about North. "But I had not thought much of that or really expected to see him again. I don't now think he is any cause for worry. A man like that hates too many people for any one of them to be alarmed about it. I didn't really want to get mixed in his affairs, but we couldn't humanly avoid it. And he will have another quarrel on his hands before next week and forget me."

"The trouble is, Mrs. Truman," Hardie began to talk, trying to excuse his didactic tone with an assumption of humor, "you regard all this as a drama arranged for your diversion. You would as soon as not accept danger and fighting in the play—"

"I will accept them outside of any play when it is necessary," retorted Ellen with spirit, "and that was what I expected to be ready for when I came out here. But you can't say that we have had many signs of them yet. There are men unfriendly to us, and I hear of harm done in other places. But you can't say that they have made any efforts to terrorize us."

"No, they were satisfied with the election in the spring and are biding their time to see the result of that. I don't myself think that there is great immediate danger. But—" What Hardie was thinking was that a woman who could deal with a rough man as Ellen had dealt with North a week ago, was entitled to be convinced of the whole truth, whatever it was. He approved strongly when John reluctantly took up his speech.

"This is your first real view of this spirit, Ellen. But one thing you will have to realize from this—your first lesson in it—is that all around us here are possibilities of such malevolence as you have just seen. The line between the parties is marked in every way. It may be that it will come to nothing worse than there has been. But this man is a kind of sign."

"I suppose he may come and try to burn our place up," said Ellen thoughtfully.

"He might," said Hardie, determined that everything should be said that could warn Ellen into caution, "and

he could get support and justification from others if he did. As soon as we come to an open political clash we shall realize their intentions in full. You have just had an object-lesson, Mrs. Truman."

But Ellen answered with a little persistent skepticism, "There can't be very many men like that, in this whole country. There is nothing in my front dooryard that looks like murder and arson," and she waved a loving hand toward the endless cloth of green spread before her. Hardie, with a look that said he had done his best, went off as usual to seek talk with Phœbe Murray.

"Well," said Ellen presently, "we can say anyway that we have had our introduction to the country." And she went away to reorganize her household affairs, which of late had been neglected or scanted. And John Truman sat still and thoughtfully reviewed his situation.

Even with Ellen he could not yet talk out fully what was formulating in his mind. It was not with ease that he kept his hands and his lips still when a man like Jim North taunted and threatened, threatened not himself but his belief and his class. But what John Truman feared always, with a sensitiveness far beyond his need, was that he might at any time allow partizanship to take the place of clear principle, unhampered by personal feeling. He could hardly think even untruth would be a greater sin in himself than it would be to let anger or vindictiveness overcloud principle as a motive of action. Since that wild March day when he had had the sharp taste of a novel passion, he had held that feeling afar from himself over and over and looked at it carefully in perspective, with the analytic detachment of a born Puritan, that he might take full account of this strange force within himself. He was convinced that it was a force that must never be loosed for action.

With every day that passed he hated slavery more freely and fully and devoted himself more completely to its extinction. But he was convinced that this was to be the work of the lawmaker and the citizen far more than it was that

of the fighter. He was glad that these busy weeks of normal home-making had followed that election time and had helped to give him the thinker's and citizen's view of the whole outcome. A man must devote to it not only all his forces, but his good temper and his self-control. Men must be careful, in these days when so much indignation and opposition were warranted, that they were not also setting free in themselves forces that a life of peace did not call for and that even this life did not fully justify. It was not for him to allow himself a quarrel with a man like Jim North, or in anything to let mere anger muddle his great indignation or turn his eyes aside from the great purpose.

In spite of Ellen's words, this summer had not been entirely quiet. The legislative results of that spring election had been constantly a matter of discussion and planning. All through the territory, wherever anti-slavery men met, they spoke deep indignation against the bogus election and the bogus legislature established through it. Protests went to the territorial governor, to be helplessly ignored by him. After all, the legislature had been formed nominally after the method prescribed by the government. Unless the election could be set aside by national sanction, nothing could be done. One convention of protest after another met in Lawrence and passed away without effective action. The whole summer was a gathering of conventions, from which Free State men went irritated and sore but with no concerted plan of movement. John Truman went to these meetings and took part in the discussions and felt himself a growing influence on the side of steadiness and firm purpose—and yet rode home irked and baffled. After all, fighting, if it were justified, would be a far simpler thing than this.

Meanwhile the bogus legislature met in July over at Shawnee Mission, as near the Missouri line as might be, and passed summary legislation by adopting the Missouri constitution outright, only strengthened by stringent laws for the support of slavery—making even speech for aboli-

tion a felony, to be punished by imprisonment at hard labor. Upon action counter to this John Truman meditated today, as he sat at his own doorstep and looked out over his own green land.

VII

HARVEY rode far afield on an early summer day, for his Kentucky horse was still a plaything to him and the country was still new and every direction beckoned. He had picked up a road and followed its curvings for a while, bendings which yet took the shortest way to their goal. Then as the charm of a distant wood called his New England eye, he turned southward toward it, free of purpose as the wind that blew in his face. The prairie wind was in itself a companion and a constant invitation to him. No other element of the new country seemed so life-stimulating as this very breath of it, whether he journeyed lightly with it or met its fresh greeting as he rode. He had undertaken no definite occupation here as yet. But he turned a friendly and versatile hand to other men's tasks and might be found setting type in a tiny office of one of the newspapers through which Free State Lawrence told the tale of Kansas to the eastern country, or helping humorously and affectionately with the affairs of the Truman family, or riding madly to restrain the menacing leaps of a prairie fire. But between times he and his horse Widmer learned the countryside, and he declared that he lived on the greenness as much as Widmer did.

The distant wood drew nearer and the low hills it covered lifted themselves a little from the level. It was nothing—only a wood—but an objective point.

He turned a curve of a hill and saw at a distance a settler's group of little buildings, and wound around another hillside and lost it again. But he found something else. Another rider had stopped on the hillside, a young figure of a girl on a slender impatient pony. She had her side-face toward him, her head thrown up in an attitude of adoration as she faced the eastern sky, still rich

with morning. He remembered instantly. It was the girl of the wagons, of weeks before. Harvey rode straight up to her.

"How do you do?" he said. "Widmer and I have been looking for you ever since."

The girl dropped her bright glance from him to the horse.

"Is that Widmer? Why Widmer?"

"After my grandmother. It's a family name."

The girl lifted inquiring eyebrows and examined the horse further.

"I'm trying to develop sobriety and dignity in him, also responsibility for family honor."

The girl laughed a little but her look seemed to wait for more serious sayings. Harvey had watched her while he talked his light talk, finding the clear brightness of her face even more than he had remembered it to be. Her eyes were dark, like her hair, and at first one saw only their quickness and beauty. But they held also a sort of expectancy of greatness which laid a demand upon whatever they looked on.

"I had hoped to see you again," said Harvey. "I thought I must have such good luck sometime—even without deserving it. Isn't this a place to meet!" He waved his arm boyishly toward the sweep of grass, empty as the sky above. All the spaciousness of it belonged to them.

The girl sent a realizing glance about it. "Doesn't it put you up high?" she said, a little deprecating shyness in her ardor.

"You don't need it," said Harvey, and then was abashed at his forwardness and tremulous lest it might be cause for offense. "Did you ever see so many flowers?" he cried, and leaped from his horse to pluck some rosy wild verbenas and bring them to her. "The flowers were more beautiful a month ago," he said apologetically.

"Where do you live?" asked the girl as she took them. And Harvey, as if grasping her consent to listen, in three minutes had told her all the important points of his condition and life. To put her in possession of them seemed to make a relation between them.

"Of course you care for the negroes or you wouldn't

have come out with the Lawrence settlement," said the girl.

Harvey hesitated, a little blankly. He distinctly did not care for negroes. "Every decent man must hate slavery!" he burst out youthfully.

The girl nodded. "That is why we are here," she said. "We are Abolitionists."

"Garrison's?" said Harvey, recalling meetings which had chanced into his experience, where sad and fiery men passed resolutions and decried the Union.

"My father doesn't altogether agree with him, though of course he belongs to the A. A. S."

Harvey laid a restraining hand upon her petulant pony, now jerking his impudent head away from Widmer's friendship-seeking nose. "I'm glad anything brought you out here," he said. "It will be awfully good luck for me if I may know you—even a little."

Summer and an empty world and a flowery path underfoot—and two young riders with charm matched to charm crossing a field of cloth of green. For Harvey no gleam of the chance of an idyll was lost and he wooed its presence eagerly; but the girl turned from it inattentively into thoughts of a harder world and its call. The note of combat was in her soft talk, the voice of an urgent though tender young crusader.

They rode up to the group of little rude buildings that formed the new farm-place, and a man turned from some outdoor carpentry to help the girl to alight, before Harvey himself could dismount; and then recognizing the friendly helper of another day, he grew more cordial in greeting. From him—while the girl stood by silent, her riding-skirt caught up in a quiet hand—Harvey learned that his name was Prescott Miles and that he called his daughter Lydia. Even Harvey recognized the type of the man, in his demanding eyes, his preoccupied attitude, his sharp gesture—marking the rough-shod idealist, the enthusiast groping for action. He had come here from Ohio to help in the free settlement of the state, at an evident cost to himself and a greater one to his family. But it was apparent also that he thought settlement was but a first step.

"The question will never be finished until it is fought over," he said vehemently, reaching the subject almost at once, as if it were always just waiting for his tongue.

"He thinks he carries the sword of the Lord," thought Harvey, while he listened respectfully.

Lydia remained near, like a handmaid to her father's words. Harvey sent his cautious glance toward her, when deference to the older man would allow, and caught the same glow in her face as in his, but softened and idealized.

"We don't know how far it will spread, but here's where it will have to start," Prescott Miles said.

Had not Lydia's face responded beside him, the man's words would have seemed absurd—with his housekeeping wife at the window behind him and his young daughter at his hand and the quiet green grass in every direction and the sweet Kansas sky above.

Fanaticism—save its own—repels youth. Harvey would have lingered, but why delay for such talk as this? He offered a neighborly grasp to Prescott Miles and a gentler one to Lydia and bowed to the listening mother at the window beyond.

"Do you ride much?" he asked of Lydia.

"Always—as far as I dare." Something seemed to hang unsaid between them even after this brief meeting, but as Harvey rode away he could not tell how much response there had been for him.

"He is a pleasant youth, but too light, I fear, for this country," said Prescott Miles behind him.

VIII

PHOEBE MURRAY with her quietly inquiring eyes watched summer pass on the green lawns before her and gently shook her head as one escort after another offered protection for the home trip. "I'll stay a little longer," she said each time the question of return came up.

John looked a little concerned as she put aside the offer of guardianship all the way to Cincinnati. "You know we are glad to have you, Phœbe," he said, "but if you wait too long you may be caught here by winter weather and have to stay. I feel responsible for getting you back home safely, now that you have been good enough to come out to see us. You'll miss a good deal if you stay here until after Christmas."

"It's what I'll miss if I don't stay that I'm thinking of," said Phœbe. "Boston is less vivid than this, now that the Revolution is over. I want to stay while I can—I may never look on history bare again."

Ellen thought of the calm, regular, well-served life of the old Murray home and of the corner Phœbe occupied in their own huddled establishment—where even what privacy she had was lost in emergencies—and laughed. "I hold it to your credit to see such attractiveness in us."

"They don't have state conventions every day in Massachusetts, or constitutional conventions springing up along our daily path. I can't go out for a ride here without finding a state germinating right in my road. How can I leave that?"

Hardie was listening and saying nothing in the discussion. Ellen, taking him in with the corner of her eye, thought she read in his, stern disapproval of Phœbe's decision mixed with inappropriate welcome of it. No one could have helped seeing how much he had enjoyed these weeks with Phœbe Murray added to the household. "This

life has almost everything a man's spirit wants," he had said once seriously, "great principle and a fighting cause and novelty and adventure." But Ellen had seen his eye at the same time follow Phœbe and thought that he had found another element that a man's spirit wanted.

To Lewis Hardie, loving as he did qualities of charm and richness in life, the coming of Ellen Truman and her home had been a godsend. He was sometimes ashamed of the degree to which he grasped a place there, and of his greedy appropriation of enjoyment of the household. He tried to make up with every kind of service for what he took to himself. Ellen, with her gaiety, her light quickness, her unfailing rightness of purpose and sentiment in his eyes, seemed to be giving him the one thing he had really sacrificed in coming out here, away from the life where women belonged. On one side of his Scotch nature he loved a cause and the chance of devotion to a cause; on the other side he loved all homeliness and the sweet cheer of a house. He carried on even his serious tasks better when he sat in the Truman home and Ellen passed and repassed him lightly and he heard the voices of the boys and the gay firm phrasing of Ellen's commands to them, or sprang up occasionally to lend an officious hand to some hard task of hers.

When Phœbe Murray came he said that now this element would be doubled, and life on this side would have all the richness it could ask for. He looked on her charm and exquisiteness and added them, though with all humility, to his resources for fine pleasure, as he had Ellen's. But Phœbe Murray was another person. She turned a kindly eye upon Hardie's proffered friendliness and then gently and almost imperceptibly laid an invisible limit to it. At first he thought it a mere social conventionality and it irked him to have it transferred to this free place. But he found in few days how little superficial recognitions really troubled Phœbe. He saw other young pioneers kept at the same impalpable distance and approved. He did not wonder that a Phœbe Murray should find a subtle self-protection necessary. But for himself it was quite superfluous and he felt sometimes aggrieved. His intimacy with the household was less complete, less uniform, than it had been before.

But as he took to himself a share in her eager interest in the place, her merry, homely relations in the house, her unintended charm, he acknowledged himself after all no loser.

Phœbe was avid of knowledge of the country. She won it everywhere, chiefly by bearing an eagerly expectant look while she listened, which made one talking to her add more and more facts and experiences to gratify her. Hardie saw her one day sitting for a full hour on her horse in front of one of the shanty structures which was a newspaper office, while the editor combed the horse's mane with his fingers and talked seriously and Phœbe listened as seriously. He saw her again one day stop before the hotel to watch the alighting of a party of immigrants from their wagons, and finally lift her arms to receive a tired baby from its tired mother and disappear into the hotel with it, while the parents made their arrangements and settlements outside. She reached home late that night, galloping along by herself in the twilight, and Hardie, who had been restlessly considering riding out to meet her, listened with satisfaction to John's worried reproof.

He found her one day at noon in Mrs. Bower's meal-giving establishment, busily engaged in helping with the last hurried preparations for dinner. Her modish riding-habit was tucked up to kitchen length and in this rough place—a long shed-like structure, chicken-coop crossed with centipede, Stivers called it,—she looked as inappropriate as could be, though there was no doubt of her enjoyment of the task. Hardie found opportunity to object sternly, "This is no place for you!"

Phœbe went on with her rapid cutting of squares of steaming cornbread. "I am sorry you think such usefulness is above me," she answered lightly.

Hardie's irritation paused in its course. "I'm afraid I do see you trailing clouds of Boston," he said, "or some place better," and departed.

Ellen could not help welcoming each postponement of Phœbe's departure, though she knew what protests would arise from the girl's distant family. The pioneer blood, she understood, was pretty well worked out in the Murray

branch of the family, and they had already been sending out wonderings and exclamations at Phœbe's inexplicable adventure. Had they seen her helping responsibly with plain and strange household duties, or riding abroad with John and Harvey to learn an uncharted country, or with laughing officiousness discovering neighborly duties for Ellen to undertake, or listening intently to the endless discussion of territorial affairs, they might have wondered more. The whole territorial procession passed under her eyes—the pioneer by habit, seasoned already in California or Iowa, free-moving, unfreighted, usually without hostages to fortune; the zealot, certain of the definite relation of Kansas to the kingdom of God, poised for warfare, impatient of every consideration but his ultimate goal, an apprenticeship in service to the Underground Railroad behind him; the home-maker, his eye on the double purpose of making a good state for his home and a good home within the state; young men out to meet the promise of adventure; philosophers coming forth on a pilgrimage to see the ground for the working out of a theory. Phœbe looked thoughtfully, gladly, at them all. Even Ellen did not guess at first how her spirit rose within her as she saw their waiting courage, their inflexibility of purpose—and clothing all that, their high spirits and the buoyancy with which they met events.

It was late August and for the third time some homegoing person had offered to set her on her way, as far as Ohio at least. "There are other good escorts in the sea," said Ellen lightly. But John's quiet thanks for the offer made Phœbe consider. Considering, she rode down into Lawrence on an errand; still considering she turned her horse's head homeward. But the usual path looked too familiar and the afternoon was still young and it was not every day that Harvey was moved to lend her Widmer. She looked toward where the California road lifted itself to the upland and moved grandly away toward its golden goal. That too was a well-worn road to her. Out across the bottom land lay Franklin, a little pro-slavery center, a mere station on the way toward the Missouri River.

John, trying to curtail her solitary riding, had warned her against certain specified places, Franklin chief of them. Forbidden adventure called in a land of adventure, a land that might soon be lost to her, and Phœbe and Widmer took the road toward Franklin. She would turn back before she reached it.

The way as she looked far along it, across the level valley, was marked off at intervals by the wagons of travelers, westward comers. It looked symbolic to Phœbe as she rode along—the East stretching into the West. She gave the easy, tentatively friendly greeting she had already learned to offer strangers, as she passed ox-drawn covered wagons or lumbering mule-drawn carriage or horsemen or dry-spoked rattling buggy. The owners of these might all soon be part of the quickly germinating state. And she—where would she be?

The wooded borders of the Wakarusa were in sight, and the enclosing hills beyond dropped abrupt leafy banks down to the water. A winding road that parallelled the Wakarusa announced a digression and Phœbe wheeled her horse into it, seeking for new things along the way. A quarter of a mile from the turn she passed a little shanty with closed doors, and a tent beside it with limp sides trailing on the ground. A few yards beyond, the road curved past a group of cottonwoods. The stretch of road in view when she had passed them promised nothing of greater interest and she turned to retrace her way to the main road. Then abruptly, as if he had been there invisible before, a horseman stood in her path, a solitary horseman on a strong bay horse. He raised his wide hat deferentially. "Pardon me, madam—but have you lost your way?"

"No—thank you," answered Phœbe. She was sure that the trees nearer the stream held other horsemen, watching the scene. "I am riding back to Lawrence." She lifted her reins to move but the man persisted.

"One does not often meet a lady on these Kansas roads." Bold admiration was in his look, along with his assumption of deference. Something of debonair quality hung about him, flavoring the roughness of his present type. His eyes

spared no detail of Phœbe's appearance. "Will you allow me to show you a short cut back to the Lawrence road?" He sent a cautious glance back toward the shanty as he spoke.

"Thank you—no," answered Phœbe, not ungraciously but firmly. "I am riding for pleasure."

"Let me persuade you," urged the man, with another glance back at the shanty. Phœbe was now sure of movements down by the stream.

"No," she said, with a bow of dismissal. She lifted her reins again and at the same time grasped more firmly her rawhide riding-whip. Harvey thought its presence an insult to Widmer but John encouraged her carrying it. The man moved his horse forward a step and reached his hand for her bridle. Widmer swerved a little from his grasp and Phœbe lifted her whip-arm and brought the rawhide down smartly across his outstretched hand. Then as Widmer started forward she struck again with all her force across his horse's back. The startled animal sprang forward with leaps that carried it rods away before the man's stinging hand could control it. And Widmer with a steadier pace but no less swift was off in the opposite direction. Harvey had not boasted of his speed groundlessly, Phœbe rejoiced to see as she fled along, listening for swarming hoofs behind her. Her back ached with the apprehension of them but she dared not turn her head until she was beyond the lonely shanty and well on the Lawrence road. Then she looked back, to see the road empty and no one moving about shanty or tent.

In the comparative populousness of the broader highway she bade Widmer slacken his speed and reviewed her own mind. For the first time in her life the chance of terror had faced her. She had left behind her she knew not what of menace. And yet she found herself less afraid than angry, and less angry than excited, deeply, and finely excited. She had no sense of indignity or insult, except to her class and belief. It was merely that a wide-spread and organized evil had touched her as it passed. She was suddenly raised to the rank of its enemy, and she found herself accepting the place gladly. She had been given an

identification with the Kansas settlement and she laid welcoming hands upon the gift and, though she smiled a little at her feeling, she took it to herself with a kind of pride. This was what the women of Kansas would have to stand.

She rode through Lawrence slowly, looking on its shag-houses and log-houses and open-faced tents with the eyes of a new fellowship. Though she had smiled at her own sentiment, she was reverent of it as well. Down in front of the hotel a group of men laughed in genuine mirth about one man, and she guessed that Sam Wood, born pioneer and free-handed hater of slavery, was as usual mellowing the events of the day with hearty humor. No one entering the rude place would have guessed what self-sacrificing and high purpose lay at the heart of each one who laughed there.

She allowed Widmer to loiter up the hillside and then turned him from the road and dashed across the upland in a grand gallop until the plain Truman house with its meager surroundings was in sight. A vision flashed across her of the white tree-nourished homes the Trumans had left behind them. "But they would rather have this," she said to herself, thinking of the hope and purpose that went with the plainness and meagerness. Ellen, appearing in the door to call to the small Matthew and then pause a moment to join in the earnest talk of John and his neighbor Laird, seemed to her to have the greatest chance that could ever come to womankind.

"John," she said that night before they went to bed, "I have decided not to take the offer of Mr. Mason and his brother to escort me to the railroad. I'll risk waiting awhile yet."

"Well," said John dubiously, "I hope you are not making a mistake."

But Ellen beamed at her understandingly. Phœbe wondered what either of them would have said if she had told what had brought her to this mind today.

IX

SEPTEMBER passed in a steady glow of gold and October in the warm Indian summer haze. Against the sober background of state anxieties which each felt in his own degree, was a warm foreground of living, of joyous risings in the bright dawn of golden days, of long rides into a beckoning distance and dreamy returns through a mellowing haze that turned everything to the quality of romance itself. Ellen was as willing as Harvey and Phœbe to rise at midnight and saddle her horse to dash off to a nearer view of a prairie fire. John turned a sympathetic, though sometimes sober face upon their pleasures and seemed to repress admonition of caution.

The autumn was wonderful to them all. "I need a new set of phrases," said Ellen looking off into the morning, where the haze of Indian summer touched the hills lightly and enriched the valleys. "My ohs and ahs are not the kind for this."

"Every word you think of is too opaque for it," said Phœbe. "You can't say where it is and where it isn't. You can no more express it than you can put your finger on it." She smiled at her own inadequacy of speech.

November crowded October out of its path. The lovely haze passed and the rosy glow of the winter grass lay clear in the bright cool sunlight. Phœbe would look from the soft coral of the hills to the blue of the sky and wonder. Would this open richness of color always be food and drink to her as it was now? Perhaps her satisfaction was the greater because under it lay a foundation of dramatic expectation. Something impended. Her Wakarusa experience made her realize that more concretely and personally. These men she saw going about their affairs, sometimes jocular, sometimes preoccupied with statecraft, always alert to the newness of things, knew that all the disputed ques-

tions of this place were not to be settled by conventions and laws alone. More than that lay in the future for them.

Around the elbow of their hillside and farther down its slope, lived the Seltons. "They are just the kind of people," said Hardie, "to come all the way out to Kansas and then live in a hollow after they got here." Selton was eagerly and scatteringly opposed to slavery, his wife timidly and rather querulously enduring his partizanship. They were poor and their first crops had been meager and Mrs. Selton was not a person of resources. Mrs. Truman was always running over on some neighborly service or dropping soothing and apt words of wisdom. Mrs. Selton's inadequacy was of the spirit as well as of action. She was fitted only to the situation where circumstances always met expectation. She constantly drew comparisons between the practical equipment of Kansas and of Indiana. Ellen and Phœbe could not even find her amusing, in spite of Harvey's assistance.

On the other side, nearer the village, was the cabin of the Lairds, Martin Laird and his wife. Laird was a Virginian, a man once prepared for the ministry but finally discarding it and even his church and at last his native state, because they all tacitly or directly allowed slavery. He had come north finally, giving up much in doing so, and lived for some years in clerical work. And now he and his wife were in Kansas, preparing to make a home and to take the chance of fighting slavery and cherishing also the hope of trying once more, in this new setting, the often-tried experiment of starting a community. Of such degrees of difference and many more, were the men whom Phœbe saw preparing for the issues of the immediate future.

In the middle of September a Free State delegate convention had met in Topeka, to take steps to form a state government. And immediately following that an election was held for members of a constitutional convention, this time without interference from Missouri voters. They had one assembly in Kansas—why elect another? And in late October the new convention—a Free State convention—met

in Topeka and adopted a constitution in which slavery had no place. Thenceforth the Topeka constitution was to be the central point of all anti-slavery effort.

But this did not come about without turmoil and increasing menace. The pro-slavery element grew steadily more vigilant and threatening. John came back from the village frequently with face dark and serious and Hardie's humor was sometimes obviously preoccupied. Other men came often in the evening and talk ran high and excited. Amos sat quiet generally, until at some word of unsuspected import he wakened and flashed into the utterance of a prophet of warfare. Often the fiery burden of his speech was, "By blood alone is remission of sins." Then when Laird or Hardie or Roger Stivers opposed him he would lapse suddenly into gentleness and quiet and perhaps return to his reading. Selton talked loudly of the deserts of the border ruffians, Harvey with boyish, often light, bravado. John, when the assertiveness of speech had reached a certain point often fell into silence. He and Hardie, at first with a show of badinage, taught Ellen and Phœbe to shoot, and Phœbe, under Hardie's unflagging tutoring, became an excellent shot. John procured a bullet-mould and Ellen learned to run bullets, "like my great-grandmother," she said gaily.

Ellen's own attitude was bi-fold. On the one side the dramatic excitement of the time satisfied her completely and she listened eagerly to talk of danger and counter-scheming. On the other hand, she was assured in her own mind that when all was said and done there would be no real fighting. The border ruffians never meant to fight. They were just trying to intimidate for political reasons. Look at that charming southerner on the boat last spring —there must be many like him and he came over to vote. "They breathe out threatenings and slaughter but it is all on their breath," she would conclude wisely. But Hardie would look at her a little impatiently and Hugh Fraser grimly, and John would hold his peace.

All through and about Lawrence the same discussions and differences ran. One man counseled aggression and another mere defense. But at last mysterious boxes marked

"Books" or "Bibles" had come from friends of emigration in the East, and two hundred Free State men now bore Sharps breach-loading rifles.

Then after so many weeks of expectation action came suddenly. Lewis Hardie came up riding furiously one early morning. He did not enter the house but they saw him talking to John outside and his face was stern and his eyelids were drawn to a sharp angle at the outer corners as they always were when he felt strongly. John was saddling his horse as they talked and he came in for only a moment to say that he had been called to a meeting in Lawrence.

Out in the Wakarusa section a few days before a man had been killed, a young man and an innocent one, shot unarmed, from behind. Factional difference had wrought itself out in a private quarrel. He had been left lying by the roadside all one afternoon, until someone sent a rough word to his friend Branson, saying that "a dead body was lying by the roadside," and Branson, all too sadly certain who was meant, went out to find his friend and bring him home.

A thrill ran through the countryside as the news moved quickly from man to man. Was it beginning? Were the deeds of Leavenworth to come to Lawrence? Charles Dow had done nothing to merit such a death as this.

Then in the night Sheriff Jones had come over from Missouri with a large posse. They came to Branson's house, a cabin half a mile from any neighbor. They took him from his bed and away from his terrified wife and children, calling him a prisoner. When he demanded authority they answered with rough and careless brevity, offering him oaths instead of a warrant. A body of twenty-five men seemed to them to be authority enough. His crime was that he had shown sympathy on the Free State side of a quarrel, and had given his friend burial. He resigned himself to the prospect of death as he went with them.

Zigzagging quickly across the country the news reached

Lawrence. Already a little party of men from claims between Hickory Point and Lawrence had gathered, prepared to move to Branson's rescue. From Lawrence Sam Wood and another man sprang to join them. Some on foot, some unarmed, they hurried across the country to a point where they could intercept Jones. It was said that he would pass Lawrence on his way to Lecompton with his prisoner. At the Abbott farmhouse they stopped to wait. Half an hour later they stepped out into the road in front of the sheriff's posse, they a dozen men to twice their number.

But the event was brief. The horsemen halted before the scanty line of footmen. A Free State man spoke toward the dark mass in the road, "Branson, are you there?" And he said, "I am and a prisoner," and they answered, "Come over here." With no opposition but oaths and threats Branson joined his friends. Jones and his gang turned and rode away toward the east. Why they did not execute at once the threats they uttered so loudly, no one could guess.

The others set their faces again toward Lawrence. Grim triumph prevailed at first. It was the first time they had thus encountered the opposing force and they had, unprepared, been successful. Then silence fell among them as excitement faded, and they remembered their weariness. Haste seemed gone and they plodded along stolidly. Suddenly Sam Wood gave a little chuckle to himself and in a moment said, "You know, men, we've taken a prisoner from the sheriff of the county."

There was a little silence and then Branson stopped in his way. "I'm sorry, men. I'd better go back."

"No!" roared Joseph Winter, bringing down on Branson's shoulder a heavy hand that forced him into his stride again.

"We're all criminals together," said Wood. "Come along."

In the dull gray of the November morning they passed through Lawrence and climbed the hill to Doctor Robinson's house and called him from his sleep for counsel. Undoubtedly they had done a momentous thing—and before that the unwarranted arrest of Branson was momen-

tous, and before that the murder of young Dow was also momentous. The men of the settlement must come together to consider what was to be done.

A drum was sounding the call to the meeting when John and Hardie rode back into the village. John sat quiet in the back of the room while excited men spoke, and perturbed men and far-seeing sober men. Branson, slow and gentle, told his tale sadly and apologetically, regretful that he was the one to bring this crisis on the friendly village. No man thought of not affording protection to him, but every man thought also of the future. In the end Charles Robinson summarized the matter. Lawrence must show herself, as yet, no aggressor. She must be ready to defend herself, from Jones or anyone, but so long as possible she must avoid giving occasion for attack. The rescuing squad were not, save two, Lawrence men. Those two must disappear if necessary, and no guilt could then be traced to Lawrence. A committee of safety was appointed, of which John Truman and Lewis Hardie were members, and the meeting dispersed.

John Truman rode home soberly, his backward-turning thoughts picturing all these scenes of the last few days, his mind reaching toward a moment of reckoning. He had listened, painfully observant, while the sad and humiliated Branson told his story, from the death of his friend to the moment of his own rescue. Murmurs and ejaculations of indignation had arisen on all sides, but Truman had been silent. What could an exclamation do?

Tom Selton galloped to the Truman house a few nights later, a figure of vivid excitement.

"Hello the house!" he cried as he halted his nervous horse at the doorstep. Then not waiting for an answer he flung his reins over a post and entered.

"Jones and his gang have come back!" he cried. "They're crowding in around Lawrence and going to burn up the town. They's three thousand of 'em a'ready an' more coming fast!" He began his excited speech before he had the door fairly open and finished it facing the

startled household at the supper-table. As they lifted silent shocked looks upon him he stood and continued to repeat, "Jones an' his men's come!"

Phœbe, turning a quick glance upon John, saw his whole look leap and quicken, as if definite purpose had suddenly been offered to him. But he sat still as if laying a hand upon his first impulse. Ellen was looking, not at him but at Selton, slowly accepting his words. Harvey had sprung up on the instant and had already donned his wamus and revolver and Amos was examining his musket. Not everyone had yet received a rifle. Ellen looked around and tried to realize it. Men were leaving her supper-table to arm themselves. She stared a moment at the scene.

"You men sit down and finish your supper," she commanded succinctly. "Mr. Selton, sit down and finish up with us. You won't be likely to get anything more in Lawrence." She laid a hospitably inviting hand on her coffee-pot. John quietly helped himself to more of the simple food and ate it, but Harvey and Amos declined to return to the table.

"Where are they?" asked John.

"Over at Franklin and along the Wakarusa now. But they'll be moving right along as soon as the rest come." He gulped the coffee fiercely and took some food in great mouthfuls. Ellen watched him, plainly discounting his news by his own excitement. But when John got up also and took his Sharps rifle and his cartridge belt, she too rose. Selton went back to his horse. Phœbe had cajoled the little boys away from the too exciting scene and was diverting their attention bedward, though not quite successfully. Their voices came through the thin partition.

"And if I saw a man pointing a gun at me," piped the small Owen, "I'd shoot him and kill him dead."

"O John!" cried Ellen, suddenly flinging herself against him and holding fast to him. John put straining arms about her for a moment.

"It may be nothing," he said. "Selton is excitable. I'll make either Harvey or Amos stay here tonight. They can't both go. I am on the committee of safety."

"No—oh no!" cried Ellen. "They may all be needed.

Phœbe and I will take our revolvers to bed with us for sleeping medicine and we'll waken as right as ever in the morning. I'm sure it is only a scare. But you must go on, dear."

John slowly relaxed his hold and picked up his rifle and went out. Ellen heard first the trampling of horses and then a parley and apparently unsatisfactory discussion. She threw the door open and the light fell on the group of men holding their horses while they argued.

"You are none of you to stay," she said clearly. "We feel quite safe. Mr. Selton, in the morning we'll bring Mrs. Selton and the children up here if you don't come home. So you may feel quite easy about them. Goodbye."

She closed the door definitely. "And oh, God take care of you!" she said to herself as she slid the bolt. "It has begun. I thought it wouldn't."

X

THUS they went off in the night. Down on the Wakarusa, some scant valley miles from Lawrence, a horde of men had gathered—not in thousands, as Selton had said, but in many hundreds. They came in much talk of protecting rights, of suppressing malefactors, of enforcing law. They brought drink with them, and some food and tents and arms, as if they were laying siege to a city. Few of them were Kansans. Jones was there and his nearest friends and David Rice Atchison, recently acting president of the United States Senate, but loving better a duty like this, and minor men of his same color. A snarling, snapping pack they were, sitting and barking at Lawrence like dogs surrounding a quarry.

Out in the valley the little bare village lay, cut off to the east by this mob and without resources to the west. Men from all the region about were riding in, like John Truman and Amos and Harvey, to take their share of the danger. Through all the surrounding section women waited, like Ellen and Phœbe, alone in cabins on farmlands.

Lawrence grimly set about organization. A few men, like James Lane and Charles Robinson, knew something of military practice, from fighting in California or Texas or Mexico. The others readily put themselves under their direction and fell into ranks. Barricades were thrown up and a semblance of fortifications, men drilled night and day, hands that had never dreamed of killing learned to hold arms for deadly purpose, sentinels watched and listened from the hilltop at night, women took account of their stores and tried to feed a score where they had fed one before. The completeness of the beleaguering seemed to raise the scale of it. But nothing of the picturesque went with this siege. There was no impressiveness about the crude mob that squatted itself out there at Franklin or

along the Wakarusa. Miscellaneous, motley in dress, loud and angry of voice, rough and uncontrolled in bearing, they would have been undesirable exponents of any cause.

In daytime some rode about the country reconnoitering or "vittling up" for provisioning the camp. Others spread themselves out along the roads into Lawrence, intercepting supplies or taking prisoners. Yet a sort of caution lay upon them. It was almost a wonder that with this body of men let loose, convinced of its justification for lawlessness, there were not daily murders. A sort of prudence or—to be fair—in some instances an innate regard for law, withheld them from the worst outrages. The crowd held men who were decent citizens at their home and who were here not for the opportunity for individual outrage or riot, but to advance a cause to which interest or belief attached them.

John Truman and Lewis Hardie were each given a squad of men to drill, both having had some rudiments of military training in earlier days. John spoke his mind impulsively once to the leaders. "We are better organized and better men than they are," he said. "Why stand all this from ruffians like that? Let us go out and rush them. This is too much to stand." Colonel Lane gleamed responsively, but Doctor Robinson—now General Robinson to the town—shook a sober head.

"We could drive them back probably," he said, "but it would do no good in the end to ourselves or to the country. Wait until they show themselves at the worst. This is a bigger thing than merely our affair."

John threw his impatient energy into drilling men and outlining fortifications. A howitzer had arrived shortly before and had been slipped guilefully past Westport and along the north side of the Kaw. Hardie was among those who sentried the hilltop at night and watched as well the isolated home where Mrs. Robinson lived and where she was now often alone while the General was off on duty.

Out at the farmhouse Ellen and Phœbe quietly took care of the place and held meals for the boys, and with their zealous ready-footed help looked after the animals. The

days were warm and open, and outdoor duties were thus lighter. Each of the women kept a quiet lookout all through the hours of the day. Each casually kept her pistol near at hand and surreptitiously moved it from place to place as she went about her duties.

"Phœbe," burst out Ellen on the second day, "you must go home! This won't do. What will your people think?"

"I am willing to discuss it," said Phœbe cheerfully, "since I could not possibly get outside of Kansas at the present moment." And she went off lightly to get a pail of water.

The day after the men left, Ellen went down to the Seltons' to see how their frailty was standing the strain of suspense and possible danger. She heard sounds as she approached the house, but a whispered pause followed her knock until she called. Then with a rush from within the door was thrown open and Mrs. Selton flung herself upon her. She was a thin little creature with a manner always nervous and uncertain, and now her face was worn and tear-stained almost beyond recognition and her movements hysterical. Her children, a tiny boy and girl, clung terrified to her knees.

"I've cried all night," she sobbed. "I'd rather die than be so scared. And Tom'll be killed. I know them men. And it ain't wuth it—it ain't—it ain't—it ain't!" The children burst into cries as her voice rose shrilly.

Ellen loosened the woman's clutch but held her wrists in firm and friendly grasp.

"You will all come over and stay with us," she said in matter-of-fact way, "and we will all feel safe together. What do you want to take with you?"

She urged the woman into prosaic choosing of necessaries and brightened the children with the prospect of going somewhere. Mrs. Selton punctuated their simple preparations with recollections or forecasts—"They say they burned a whole family in a house over at Bloomington and hung the man," or "If they's a fight Tom'll be the fust one into it, I know. All his folks is short-lived,"—while Mrs. Truman continually recalled her attention to the bundles

they were preparing. She herself sprinkled water on the fire and found nails for nailing down the windows and helped to decide on what possessions were to be carried along. "Of course if they burn your house an' leave ours be—" said Mrs. Selton. In the end she stumbled up the hill laden with her choicest treasures, shrinking up against Ellen every few steps, her blinking terrified eyes on some fancied mark on the horizon. To Ellen the steep laborious way seemed interminable, but in the end she flung open her own door, gaily crying, "Here we are, and we have met the Missourians every step of the way and we're still safe." She somehow placed Mrs. Selton in their household and herself took on a satisfying masculinity in having so frail a vessel to guard. Phœbe was tenderly patient with the woman; Ellen sometimes found her fears irksome, but Phœbe gently forestalled them hour by hour. Matt and Owen took on some years of responsibility in having the entertainment and spirits of those still younger than they given into their care. The mother readily transferred responsibility for them, except for an occasional general precept. "Always mind your manners when you go visiting," she would caution the boy, or "Don't hit Sissy if it makes her cry." When her husband made his brief daily visit she divided his time between weak solicitude for him and petulant whining reproaches.

John or Harvey or Hardie, or sometimes all in succession, dashed out every few hours to satisfy themselves of the continued safety of the home and to take the heavier burdens off the women. Ellen and Phœbe cooked and cooked, as far as their resources would allow, and sent the men back each time with sacksful behind their saddles, to relieve to that degree the burden in the village. The older men came with obvious trepidation each time, and went away with slow reluctance.

And still Jones' army waited down there, threatening and inactive.

"Did you see Henry Watson pass here day before yesterday?" John asked on the fourth day.

"Yes, he gave us a halloo and then rode back and asked us for a drink."

"He hasn't come back." Then he added quickly, "He wasn't feeling very well when he went."

He changed the subject. Henry Watson lived four miles farther on, in the general direction of Lecompton. He and his wife lived alone a little way from the main road. Ellen brought the conversation around to him again before John left but he added nothing to what he had said.

When John had gone—he had dashed out early in the morning to assure himself of their overnight safety—Ellen said quietly to Phœbe, "I am going out to the Watsons'. I know where they live."

"How?" asked Phœbe, but in no surprise. Nothing was surprising in these days.

"I'll take the wagon. If he is sick I'll probably bring him back here. If he isn't sick I may need the wagon anyway," she added.

Phœbe wondered to herself at the quietness with which they implied things like this. But she went out to help Phœbe harness and hitch up. John kept more horses than the most of his neighbors; oxen as yet did the most of the drudgery of the country. Then Ellen drove away; and Phœbe said not a word of possible danger to either.

What trepidation marked those lengthened miles for Ellen, she did not acknowledge even to herself. It was something, she said mentally, to get away from Mrs. Selton for a few hours and to have a chance to turn around in her own mind. So she took comprehensive breaths of the prairie and wondered if this color would last all winter and indulged the occasional conscious feeling in her back with no rearward look.

At the Watson house all was still, but smoke came from the chimney. As Ellen drove before the house a figure appeared within, at a cautious distance of observation from the window. Then the door opened and Mrs. Watson came out. She was a strong middle-aged woman, fresh-colored and black-haired, with a look both of ready vigor and moral endurance. She came quickly up to the side of the wagon and spoke solicitously though quietly, "Is there anything wrong, Mrs. Truman?"

Ellen had to smile a little as she answered, "I feared there might be here and I came to see."

"And you drove all this way alone in these times! You New England women are born Kansans. But I'm glad you came. My husband came home sick day before yesterday and is worse this morning. He has a high fever. I was beginning to be uneasy," she added in even tone.

"I am becoming a rescuer of dames," said Ellen. "Is he too sick to move?"

Mrs. Watson led her in, to add her medical knowledge to her own. The three of them contributed to the diagnosis, the main conclusion from which was that no matter what was his condition it would be better to move him. Whether better or worse tomorrow he would be in better case nearer Lawrence, either to give or to receive help. So the two women carried a light bed-tick out to the wagon and covered it with many pillows and covers and put in the necessaries for many days to come and added finally his saddle and led out his horse to tie behind the wagon. Then they helped the big heavy man out to the wagon and somehow into it. He sank down among the pillows saying wearily, "Take me anywhere."

So they started slowly on the miles that led back to the Truman house. Ellen found herself taking satisfaction in the large adequacy and control of the other woman. Even now, with her backward look or hand always waiting on her husband's comfort, there was a great part of her still ready to give to other things—to the immediate danger and the larger issues behind it and the organization of Lawrence, to expression of gratitude to Ellen and solicitous inquiry into the condition of her affairs, to thought of her less fortunate neighbors.

"I wanted to go into Lawrence after the first day to help the women," she said. "They are having a harder time than the men for the present, with all the cooking and other things. There may be nursing to do too. But Henry wanted me to wait a day or two, and then he came home like this."

She bent backward to look carefully at her husband.

He had fallen into a deep sleep even amidst the lumbering jolts of the heavy wagon. Ellen looked also, to see what signs his sleep gave and to draw an estimate from them. She turned her look back to the road again, in time to see two horsemen come up over the slope and gallop toward them. Another man also came into view but drew rein at the turn of the hill and stood watching them and her wagon. The men rode recklessly and loosely, on rather poor mounts. Ellen drew her pistol from her deep pocket and laid it on the seat beside her but drove steadily on, even when one of the men shouted a short "Halloo!" at her. The men turned in their path at a sharp angle and rode straight at her, wheeling their horses at last with a flourish to stop in the road before her and halt her.

Ellen looked steadily and inquiringly at them, as if such stoppage were merely a puzzling incident. One man had heavy broad features and looked stupidly ill-tempered; the other was slender and nervous, with bright shrewd eyes and a touch of rough jollity about him. His speech was southern.

"Excuse our curiosity, ladies," he said, "but we'd like to know what you're carrying round in your wagon. Maybe it's something we'd like to have."

"It's a sick man," said Ellen directly and naturally.

"Maybe we could make him take up his bed and walk," said the man jocularly and they moved up nearer, one on each side of the wagon.

"What's the matter with your sick man?" growled the other one.

"We're afraid it's small pox," said Mrs. Watson suddenly. "Do you know the beginning of small pox when you see it?"

The stolid one drew back a little. "I ain't anxious to see it," he said.

The other one laughed loudly and skeptically. "Don't wake the baby," he jeered, and fired into the air.

A commanding shout interrupted his next moment and the third horseman galloped up.

"Are you fighting ladies, men?" he asked quietly.

Ellen, to her pleased surprise, recognized the agreeable southerner of the boat, months before.

He raised his hat as he turned to the women and then recognized Ellen. "I am very glad to see you again, Mrs. Truman," he said with evident pleasure, and Ellen could not help smiling at the introduction of quiet social pleasantness into the scene. "Can I be of any help to you?" He looked at the covered figure in the back of the wagon. He had an air of shouldering the other men out of the way.

"This man is sick and we are taking him to my house to care for him better," said Ellen.

He reached over and with a gentle hand lifted the light cover which protected Watson's face.

"Hell! If it ain't Henry Watson!" exclaimed the heavy man peering under his arm.

Evans looked carefully at the flushed face and marked the breathing.

"I'm a little of a doctor," he said. "The man is pretty sick. If you have no objections I would like to ride by you until you reach your house."

Ellen's answer waited on the look of Mrs. Watson, who was still examining Evans with inquiring eyes. When she saw their intentness relax a little she said simply, "We shall be very glad if you will." She still held to belief in her early impression of the southerner.

The other two men conferred a little apart. "What the hell do you think he's up to?" said one.

Evans turned to them. "You two men can go on. I'll help Mrs. Truman."

The men stared, each after his kind. "What the hell —" began one again, he of the limited expression. They exchanged suspicious glances. Horace Evans rested an authoritative eye upon them for a moment and then removed it, dismissing them completely.

He gave a touch or two to the bed and with a strong steady hand adjusted Watson's position. Then they started on. The other men watched a little from their point of withdrawal, and then with wild shouts and wanton pistol-shots galloped off. "Some men never grow up," said

Evans in grave apology, as if they were merely exhibiting boyish spirits.

Ellen gripped her lines tightly and drove on, keeping almost as firm a grip on her control. She kept her pistol still beside her and her mind followed over and over in imagination the movements by which she could quickest bring it into use. And yet she trusted the man in spite of all facts and trusted his ability to care for them, as well as his intention. She watched his riding, as he passed on a few yards ahead of them, and his horse worthy of the riding, the noblest horse she had seen in Kansas. She sent a sidewise glance at Mrs. Watson and met her shrewd firm look, reassuring, though her stake was at the moment the greater.

They were glad of his help when they reached home, and it took all his strength as well as theirs to get the sick man, now stupid and inert, from wagon to bed.

Evans was coming from the bedroom, the same room where the sick mother and baby had lain, when his eye first rested on Phœbe—Phœbe with dark hair smooth as ever over her small head and her dress combining present appropriateness with the charm of lighter days—entertaining the querulous and nervous young Seltons and inquisitive young Trumans with their midday food and offering between-times a soothing word to Mrs. Selton, helpless with a new alarm. Her first word at sight of the party had been, "Have they shot him?" and it took more than Mrs. Watson's conclusive "No" to reassure her. Now while Phœbe ministered to her children and quieted their spirits with sprightly inventions which personified and dramatized their plain bits of food, she sat clasping and unclasping futile fingers, a shivering little figure of terror.

Evan's warm surprised look at Phœbe sobered as it turned to her. But he found a kind jolly thing to say to the littlest ones and a masculine remark establishing fellowship with Matthew and Owen, and moved toward the door with a bow to Mrs. Selton which seemed to take regretful cognizance of her troubled state.

Ellen came from the bedroom to follow him with thanks for his kindness.

"Don't thank me," he said in an embarrassment he had not yet shown. "I can't apologize—"

Ellen assisted him with, "Is he very sick?"

"He would be if he didn't have good care. But a man like that always has a good chance. I'll see if I can't find a doctor and get him to come. But this is a disease of the new country and I have seen it treated as I suggested a good many times. He is fortunate in this country to have nurses." He looked past Ellen at Phœbe. "If I am riding this way again may I stop to inquire for your safety?" he asked of Ellen.

"Certainly," said Ellen courteously, but not with her usual bright cordiality.

"Ellen," cried Phœbe as the door closed behind him, "you didn't offer him a bite and it is one o'clock!"

"No," said Ellen, "—it was too complicated."

She led the way out to the kitchen presently and told what she knew of Evans and his affiliations.

"He seemed so completely decent," Phœbe answered in surprise. He really seemed much more than that, but she said no more.

That afternoon was the hardest they had yet spent. The children reflected the general atmosphere and were nervous and dependent on their elders. Mrs. Selton wept often and between-times predicted woe. They watched anxiously the sick man's condition and ran eagerly to wait on Mrs. Watson. About four a stranger knocked, saying that he was a doctor and had been sent to see the sick man. At a little distance they saw another man—perhaps Evans—holding two horses. They eyed the mysterious doctor suspiciously, but he prescribed only simple medicines and nursing, and left them comforted a little. And indeed Mr. Watson did seem at least no worse.

At twilight John came for a moment to relieve his heart by an evening glimpse of them. He attended to the stock and then departed swiftly again. Ellen came out of the house and stood for a moment with him, trying for

one instant to free her mind of everything that lay behind her. Suddenly it all seemed thrown on her in a heap, all she had been making light of to John—the lonely ride and hazardous return, the threatening shooting men, the crowded houseful within doors, the sick man and anxious wife, the ill-trained crying children, the querulous trembling woman, the envelope of danger all around them. A contrasting picture abruptly crossed her mind and she suddenly put her head down on John's shoulder and shook with laughter.

"Ellen!" cried John, thinking she was hysterical from the anxieties of the day.

"Oh, nothing," said Ellen, raising her head with a long rippling breath of weary mirth, "I was thinking about the difference between this and Bristol, Massachusetts."

"Oh, Ellen dearest!" cried John with futile pathetic caresses.

But Ellen withdrew in a minute with restored sobriety and went back into the cautiously lighted house, where Phœbe was putting the fretful little Seltons to bed and Mrs. Selton was crying once more and Mrs. Watson was putting cold cloths on her husband's head.

XI

DOWN in the little village men held themselves alertly in restraint, waiting. Many a one chafed at the quiet control of the leaders. It is no easy thing for a man to endure every insult but a blow itself before he strikes.

Supplies ran low. The mob had guards at every ford to appropriate all freight. Men slipped across the open country in the night, taking great risks, to reach food and bring it into Lawrence. Out along the California road a Free State man held a supply of powder for Sharps rifles, but no man could pass the scouts on the open prairie to bring it in. "I will go," said Mrs. Sam Wood. Her husband was in hiding from the Jones men, that he might not give them even false excuse to strike Lawrence. "And I," said another brave woman. Men reluctantly let them go, but respect for the courage of women forbade protest. From patrolling Missourians they met only a jocular gallantry, and they came back with the ammunition.

Over near the edge of Missouri, beyond the armed mob, a Kansas governor was stationed, a man as yet new to the territory and as yet uninformed of anything but the desires of the government and the views of the men he had found on the border. He had been told by Sheriff Jones that Kansas was in a state of resistance to law and at his demand had called for the Kansas militia to overcome that resistance—and had brought out chiefly Missouri militia. Behind his back his Territorial Secretary, Woodson, was calling for a Missouri organization, the Platte County Rifles, though adding slyly, "Do not implicate the Governor," and Jackson County alone was sending four hundred men. It was a bewildering place for a logical governor who had no desire of his own for bloodshed.

It was not until the beginning of the fifth day that

envoys from Lawrence, cajoling their way through the Wakarusa lines with the assistance of a bottle of liquor, brought him a letter from the committee of safety and their own oral account of the law-abiding non-resistance of the Free State men. Governor Shannon opened his ears. This was a different story from any that had reached him before. That night he arrived at the Wakarusa camp and looked about him. This was the "militia" which he himself had called out to suppress recalcitrant Lawrence —which had not yet fired a shot, even in the Sheriff's own story.

It was Wednesday, the seventh morning. Ellen rose in the darkness from her pallet on the floor and let herself move wearily as she lighted her candle. She slept without undressing on these nights.

"I won't put on my spirits until the rest of them are up," she sighed. Her household was at its best asleep and she encouraged late lying. Then she heard a horse's galloping feet outside and stopped in stiff listening until Harvey called quietly, "Halloo!"

Even then she moved in suspense until she had unfastened the door and slipped out and seen his face. She saw it only dimly, but it was reassuring. "Why so early, Harvey?" she asked evenly.

"Oh, we get up early in camp. There's getting to be so many of us that there isn't sleep enough to go around. John was fussing about but he couldn't get away before noon and he wanted to know how you are."

"We are all right. Mr. Watson may sit up today."

"Well, I'll just feed your menagerie now that I'm here and go right back."

The prosaic little conversation satisfied Ellen somehow, and she went back to get Harvey a warm breakfast behind a carefully closed kitchen door.

"How's the all-tears lady?" asked Harvey, drinking his roast-grain coffee at the kitchen shelf.

"Not quite so weeping. She's getting used to things."

"She'd better do all she has in her mind to do, for it's nearly over, one way or the other. Governor Shannon is

coming to Lawrence today." Harvey brought out his news casually, with boyish desire for effect.

"Harvey! What will they do?"

"I don't know, but something. We're to send an escort for him. I got up early to practice a salute."

"Thank God!" cried Ellen. "That may be no better for us, but he is at least a sign of government. Was that where John was going?" she added.

"No," said Harvey between bites, "he had to look after a detail of men doing something, I think. John is so eternally useful. He may not get out today. But he's all right—hunting for something to eat already when I left."

He looked carefully around to see that he was leaving no desirable food and departed swiftly on a galloping Widmer.

Several miles to the south of them John Truman was riding with three or four other men accompanying an empty wagon. Out along that road somewhere young Thomas Barber was lying where he had fallen, shot from behind by a man in national service, one of the group from the Wakarusa camp. John had seen him the afternoon before, riding away with some of his friends to take a reassuring look at their homes after days of absence. He knew them well, men of his own company.

Now in the earliest morning hours his captain had come and wakened him, where he slept on his blanket under the roof of the unfinished Free State Hotel. He said, "Truman, Barber has been killed out along the Bloomington road and I want you to take some men and a team and go out to bring him in."

Truman rose to his feet, springing directly from sleep into this horror. He stood looking blindly at the man. He had never in his life known profanity, but an oath rose unbidden to his lips, and he said it again with intention while he heard as much of the fact as was known. Barber going quietly home had been shot in the road, from behind.

The fury of that election day was less than this, as he found his men and team and went out with them along

the dim morning road. He had counted on the possibility of open battle, and all these days he had been preparing for it. But battle would have given him no such feeling as he had when he lifted Thomas Barber's body from the December ground.

As they came back with their burden along the road, now plain and open in the bright clear morning, three men crossed their way and followed the slope below them. They all carried guns. Perhaps they did not know what the wagon bore or that the riders were a funeral escort. But they shouted a jeering name as they went on and a moment later a bullet flew near John's head, while the men galloped rapidly away.

"That fellow was Jim North," said the man beside him. And John remembered old threats and saw how this pro-slavery cause could cover the purpose of private malice.

He laid Barber in the Free State Hotel, now the barracks of the guard, and surrounded him with what decency of circumstances was possible, and sent men to meet the young wife on her way and guard her to town. He had no further duty, since all activity, even talk and feeling, waited on the outcome of the Governor's coming. He longed for the right to lead men in direct attack. Yet he could not but acknowledge the reasonableness and shrewdness of the policy that was advocated by Doctor Robinson and by such men as Hugh Fraser and Hardie, the policy to which he had thus far committed himself.

And then after all this, it ended suddenly and undramatically. After these days of threatening and loud truculence there was abruptly quiet, and emptiness over on the Wakarusa. The war was over.

The Governor had come to Lawrence and inquired and gone back then to Franklin and inquired further. He looked on the quality of the men he had been tricked into sanctioning and called them shortly hyenas. Moreover captains of the "militia" also disavowed Sheriff Jones and his works, the more so since he did not have the courage to follow them up to any result.

"Sheriff!" said one in the hearing of the Governor. "He's no more sheriff than any other rascal is. They have to have somebody to do their dirty work for them. But he ain't smart enough to turn his own trick. They'd better get somebody else if they can find one both ornery and smart."

Some of the mob grew tired of inaction and apparent lack of plan and quietly returned to Missouri. And finally the natural elements seemed to declare themselves on the side of Kansas and the delightful camping weather of the last month turned to a blizzard. It was no season for either camping or foraging. There was a sudden hurried movement back to Missouri.

So without satisfaction of any sort of victory on one side or any retort for insult offered on the other, a treaty was signed. The Governor signed in one part and Charles Robinson and James Lane in the other. The Governor came to a peace banquet—under the same roof where Barber had lain—and all men put on the semblance of gratification and many of them, eager to return to their homes and their unprotected families or unfinished houses, really felt it.

John Truman came to the banquet and sat with the Governor's party and went away again acquiescent but dissatisfied. One voice had spoken to which he could listen. Shannon and Robinson and Lane had come from signing the farcical peace treaty, to address the crowd of Lawrence men and to try to satisfy it by saying, each in his own way, that peace had been reached and that Lawrence was safe once more. Then as they left their rude platform another man, unknown to the gathered crowd, rose in their place and lifted his voice to speak against a treaty where there should be no treaty. He was a strange old man but yesterday come to the camp with his four sons and but shortly before that to Kansas. A mere look at him was like hearing a voice in the wilderness, John Truman thought as he paused to hear him when he spoke. He was spare and angular, as if he had used his frame hardly, and his movements sharp. He wore a look of austerity

and openness to suffering and his eyes had the look of one who seeks truth. He might not find it, you could think as you looked at him, but he would take the way he thought led most directly to it. Yet other men might think it a sadly mistaken way, a way to which feeling guided him rather than reason. His name was John Brown.

XII

THEN with the sudden contradiction of mood and purpose to be found in a newly organized place, Lawrence rejoiced the next night in a community festival in which it celebrated the departure of the enemy, and in which it at the same time invited the enemy to share. Some "captains" from the scattering camp were present to partake of peaceful hospitality and take the hand of tentative friendship. Even Sheriff Jones himself was here, "disguised as a guest," as Hardie said, clumsily going through social forms with those whom he had just been persecuting.

Word had been sent to women all about to prepare food and come in, and they came in surprising numbers and spirits. Harvey came out for Ellen and Phœbe, and they got out pretty gowns from a seldom used supply and appeared looking "partified enough to turn the affair into a ball," Harvey said. They were not the only women who had the same impulse and the rooms showed a promiscuous "best," with even glistening silks and velvet bandings and with wide flowing skirts and sleeves. Ellen's eyes filled at first and she looked blindly at the scene when she came into the crowd in the big dining-room of the Free State Hotel, yesterday a barracks, today a reception hall. Husbands and wives were meeting after days of separation by the utmost danger to each, men were relaxing from the strain of days of watching and of intensest feeling, the whole community was for the moment waving goodbye to danger and to anxiety. Ellen knew as well as any woman there that the measure of that rejoicing lay in the depth of the fear that had gone before. She was not the only woman of them who had slept beside her children with a hand on her pistol.

John in his quiet complete way was doing much to make

social relations in the occasion seem to indicate entire satisfaction with the result that had been reached. Ellen watched him as he went here and there in cordial or even suave talk and realized how thoroughly he was giving himself to the effort to make this compact of peace complete. From her own center of brightness, where in her pretty dress and her gaiety of social mood she constantly drew a circle about her, she saw him talking courteously with one after another of the enemy leaders and guessed how conscientiously he was compelling himself to this course. Whenever he came back to her he was silent and absent.

There were speeches, the accent of their satisfaction tempered to meet the ears of the visiting enemy. Phœbe thought she detected in the attitude of the leaders after each speech, relief that it was over and nothing unfortunate had been said.

"It is difficult, no doubt," Hardie murmured beside her. "It would be better if this were only a family affair. It is hard to take the right shade of diplomatic rejoicing over a bloodless victory, with the enemy listening." Many Lawrence faces too looked lowering and grim at mention of the treaty.

John was called on to speak but escaped with only a few sentences of innocuous congratulation. Ellen could not help wishing that he had said more. Other men could speak no more authoritatively than he. Phœbe, as one of the few young ladies in the place, always occupied what she gaily called an unmerited bellehood, the subject of much jest on Harvey's part, and this evening she found herself with rather more attention than she could well manage. It was difficult for Hardie to secure any moments for himself.

"Don't I deserve anything?" he asked at last impatiently, when he had got her away for a minute from the care of two awkward youths who had brought their guns to the festivity.

"Those boys have been up two whole nights," she said apologetically.

"So have I," he answered shamelessly.

"Oh, I know it!" cried Phœbe. She looked at him with

open approval. "I've heard—Tom Selton told me of your sentinelling every night and about your getting those men across the south ford with the cornmeal and helping to drive the Missourians away from the Greens' cattle and—"

"Tom suffers from freedom of speech. It's a good thing his tongue doesn't have to have a license." But he listened as if to hear more praise, too rare for him, he thought, on Phœbe's lips.

"Dare I tell you how you adorn this occasion?" he said. His strained tired look relaxed and warmed under her eyes. She had put on a pale blue dress that carried more of richness and ornament than she usually thought appropriate and she wore a glittering band on her hair. Brightness seemed to emanate from her. She and Ellen had both taken on a more marked social manner than usual and helped instinctively to give quality to the miscellaneous gathering. It made Phœbe seem more like what she must be in her own place at home and Hardie felt both nearer to her and farther away from her than he had before. On this social plane they would have met elsewhere—but with the attendant formality of such a plane. She smiled an acknowledgment of his compliment with gracious dignity, but her eyes did not lose the intent observation with which she was looking on the scene.

"How strange it is," she said. "This easy mixed-up festival—after these days! It actually seems less natural than the fighting did."

"Or the not-fighting. It isn't even so natural as it looks. This is merely the frosting for the treaty with some candies stuck into it. Look at Mrs. Robinson." He indicated where she was standing talking graciously with one of the enemy captains. He was bowing and smiling gallantly over the small lady and she was obviously making every effort to endure genially his too accentuated manner.

Phœbe laughed. "Her share of the fighting," she said.

"Will this ever lose interest for you?" Hardie asked, looking around on the medley assembly.

"How can it? There never was anything so interesting. It is queer," she said with a sudden girlishness, "but I

often feel *old* out here. Even the men that are the most responsible here seem so thoroughly young."

"I know," answered Hardie. "They're cut out of the very cloth of youth. Or rather, they're not so much young as new. That is the chief fascination of it—this combination of iron seriousness with all the freshness of early daylight. It has a flavor!" His journalistic duty, representing this place and its happenings to the eastern world, led him to conscious analysis of aspects which others overlooked. No one responded to his analysis with more interest than Phœbe did. She tasted the flavor now, looking over the mixed assembly with its many degrees of social cultivation. She herself seemed such a piece of fineness, of finish, among the others, that Hardie wondered she was not more aware of the observation she drew.

"What do you think of the treaty?" she asked.

"It's a joke," he answered, dropping his voice. "It's as if a man threatened to knock me down and pulled my nose and the judge bound me over to keep the peace. But there had to be some punctuation to this affair. We hope this will be a semi-colon at least."

"Not a period?"

"This weather is more of a period than anything else could be. Amos says the Lord is on our side."

Horace Evans approached them and at the same time Doctor Robinson beckoned Hardie away. Since the day when they brought Henry Watson to the house sick, Phœbe had seen Evans several times. Twice he came to the door to inquire for their welfare and on other days she had seen him ride by at a distance.

"I had hoped for your hand also, Miss Murray," he said greeting her. "I shall feel that the hatchet is buried deeper if you approve."

"My civic share is so small that my approval is unimportant."

He hesitated. "I can't help hoping for your individual forgiveness. I assure you that my part in this has been a very reluctant one."

"We don't talk of forgiving enemies in principle like

this," said Phœbe slowly. "We make treaties but we don't raise the question of forgiveness."

"After all," he urged, "we are going away without doing real harm."

"Are you?" said Phœbe lifting skeptical gray eyes. Then she remembered the occasion and her share in offering hospitality. "I suppose," she said more lightly, "even the king of France devastated a good deal of country when he marched up and down hill."

He endured the jest. "I know I am in no position to argue for myself. But I wish that you would credit me with trying to make the devastation as light as possible."

Phœbe was silent. She found herself on the verge of sharpness but she could hardly compel herself to greater courtesy when he insisted on a personal tone. She looked about for someone to bring to her relief but apparently no one cared to share her responsibility.

He persisted. "I wish I might tell you—my opportunity is so scanty—that we do have something of political principle and belief on our side, even if our methods are wrong. Nobody is more sorry for the methods than I am."

"I hope we shall see the day when this will be over in Kansas," said Phœbe seriously, and finding Harvey with her eye beckoned him by means of a look. But Evans still had time to say, in a lowered tone, "I dare to hope you will see us more truly in those days." Harvey reached her side with a prompt remark and Evans turned away.

"Conquering the bachelor enemy, Phœbe?" asked Harvey. But Ellen came to say that it was time to go home, and then John and Hardie came to tuck them into their vehicle and Harvey took them out on their cold ride while the other men went back to their barracks for the night.

The Wakarusa war was over. Neither side could claim any satisfaction from it or its outcome, and yet things would never be the same again. "Humpty Dumpty is off the wall," said Hardie, and John assented grimly. The next day the Free State militia was nearly all mustered out

of service, and the men dismissed hastened wearily and gladly back to their homes. Many found stock or grain gone or buildings destroyed. To them the treaty seemed an empty thing as they looked on the wanton despoilment.

Harvey returned home with John, but Amos did not come until the next night. He had gone out with John Brown on his way.

For John Truman, so glad was he to reach his own doorstep and put his arms about his family again, that for the moment he expressed only frank satisfaction and happiness. Yet in his heart he was assured that the knowledge and experience he had found would not always leave him in peace.

XIII

NO one had expected such cold weather as this. The last winter, the first one for the most of the colony, had been warm and charming all through, and settlers had ardently congratulated themselves on their choice of climate. John, making ready last spring for the coming of Ellen and the boys, had built tightly and banked foundations well. But not many were thus prepared. Shag houses opened cracks to cold winds and sifted snow through. Unchinked log houses showed white carpets to owners rising in cold dawns. Tents and unfinished buildings proved only paper barriers to the icy prairie wind. Bare earth floors were ungrateful footing to unaccustomed feet. Lawrence suffered.

John and Amos went with Tom Selton to put earth banking around his little house before he moved his family back. Henry Watson was ready to go home days before they dared allow him to face the prairie ride. It took all the patience of everyone to endure the crowding of the house day and night, and the rubbing and scraping of one personality on another. Amos and at last Harvey found means of living temporarily in the village to give room to a woman with a coughing little boy, whom Ellen had discovered the night of the treaty party. Immigration had gone on faster than building through the autumn, and men now suffered privation of every kind. Circumstances were so nearly alike among people that it was hard for one to help another. Even Ellen found her desire often outstrip her power.

After all, her own household was not greatly distressed, except sympathetically, by this hard condition. Like New England "good providers" they had laid in more fuel than most settlers thought necessary or possible—"following the instincts developed in your natural habitat," Hardie said

—and were at least sure that they would not freeze. In intervals between the worst storms they managed to keep a store of provisions in advance of their needs, though plain and little varied. Prairie chickens and even venison and—for a novelty—buffalo, gave something of variety. So they had no anxiety for themselves and were still able to offer help to others. It was widely necessary, for the aftermath of the Wakarusa war was keenly felt. Shipments of provisions were stopped and confiscated on the border, freight of all kinds held up, letters opened and remittances of money appropriated.

More than once John brought out a half-sick man recently come to the settlement, to lie by the Truman fire and eat more generous food than his village quarters afforded. "I don't see that you New Englanders have anything to complain of," said Hardie to New Hampshire Willetts, whom he found sitting with a rheumatic knee against the kitchen oven. "This merry winter weather ought to make you feel at home." But Ellen thought of full woodsheds and cellars in well-provisioned New England, and of strong tightly-built houses and warm, abundant feather-beds—and then of the New England spirit which made men give up the comforts they had carefully collected and come out to take part in this. "I notice that New Englanders still set something else above mere warmth," she said lightly. "Anybody can be warm if he will stay in a warm place."

But she could not show all the high satisfaction she felt as she looked at the endurance of discomfort in the settlement and knew that mere fortune-hunting or adventure would not have brought these men and women—not all from New England, by any means—to this willingness to live hardly and even to suffer greatly. Two or three times they had joined a little procession that climbed the hill above the town and moved out across the snowy upland to the tiny cemetery. Here where last summer they had opened the flower-sprinkled sod to lay the baby, men now hardly and laboriously picked out graves in the frozen iron soil.

But one good came with the bitter cold. The retreating

pro-slavery army retired to their homes and waited a happier time. No action followed the Wakarusa war, though no one dreamed that affairs were settled or that the "treaty" was final or accepted as more than a momentary compromise by the other side. Anti-slavery state organization went on, to furnish a nucleus for general understanding and policy. The constitution framed by the Free State constitutional convention in Topeka in October had been sent to Congress with application for admission of Kansas as a state. The House accepted it and passed a bill admitting the territory, but the Senate rejected it, as everyone had expected. It was only one step in the fight and no one was greatly disappointed.

Roger Stivers proposed as a problem in mental arithmetic, "We now have two constitutions and one has been half accepted. How many constitutions have we?"

"Anyway we know now just what we are fighting about," said another. And in accordance with their instrument they moved to a general election amid the cold of January and took to themselves a full set of state officers and representatives for a legislature. John was named by many for the legislature but he firmly forbade use of his name, though Ellen looked wistfully at the office.

"It wouldn't make you any better or better for me if you had an office," she said. "But we should be glad years from now when the state is made, for you to have had the greatest possible part in it."

"My part will have to be different," said John smiling.

Doctor Robinson, the reasonable, the steady, the controlled and far-sighted, was elected governor. "Some people could see a joke in all this," said Hardie as he unwound his ice-edged scarf beside the Truman fire the next day. "But anyway one set of men have titles to keep them warm."

"Cast my first vote," Harvey announced with great triumph. "I was looking forward to this when I had my birthday put on the third of January. It isn't every young citizen that can make his debut on such an occasion. Of course it looks a good deal like getting a government just to lay it by for a rainy day."

But though the high spirit of the settlers found a gal-

lantly jocular word for everything and though the election was more a declaration than actual accomplishment, there were few who did not find satisfaction in subscribing to the declaration thus made and high forecast in the rallying-point they had thus formed for themselves.

John Truman was busy constantly. He took every possible means to lighten Ellen's varied cares and to ease the conditions of the crowded household. He rode abroad much among his neighbors, looking for cases of need or trouble. He was a "born neighbor" as Fraser said of him. After a heavy storm had kept them in for days, he was off immediately, as soon as his cares at home would permit, going the rounds of those who might possibly be in need. He gave a strong hand to help in the settlement of immigrants in their new homes and made it especially his business to see that titles to claims were clear and that no enemy could interfere with a man's possession of his land. He spent much time with Doctor Robinson and the other leaders in conference, and took over much important correspondence. He rode to Topeka once or twice on important negotiations. The committee on safety thought earnestly and planned busily. Many men learned to love John Truman in those hard days. As weeks went by men seemed to feel more and more the heartening of his presence and the steadiness and indispensability of his counsel.

"He is just the one man we couldn't do without," said Hugh Fraser to Ellen one day, "though we can't get him to take any real office to himself."

Ellen was speculatively sorry for Hardie in these days. He was relegated entirely to quarters in the village where in kindness he had taken Harvey in with him, and she knew he managed that comforts, such as they were, were divided unequally between them. Conditions were hard at the best and Ellen knew that Hardie did not take the best while there was an invalid or a woman or child he could pass it on to. "Don't be sorry for me," he said in answer to her spoken solicitude. "I am having so much to write about these days that I haven't any time to feel

my troubles.'' And indeed his newspaper letters in those weeks were vivid.

What Ellen really commiserated him for was something she could not speak of, the conditions of his seeing Phœbe in the Truman home. There were no prairie talks or rides in this weather, no continuing of talk after the others had scattered, no concerted enthusiasm over morning haze or evening moonlight, no joining in silent love of stretches of color or golden air or spirited wind. Hardie was largely Highland in his birth, with a silent emotional love of great elements of beauty which the simple greatness of this country fed. As it satisfied Phœbe morally it satisfied him poetically. While his thought day by day dealt with principle and policy and truth, he eased his feelings constantly, even in this white or bare time, with the acceptance of this austere beauty. But he could not now look on it with Phœbe Murray.

In spite of weather he came every few days, justifying his defiance of cold with letters or news or a recently-arrived and precious book, and sitting with them until twilight or approaching storm drove him back to town. But he found them always in family group and unless he followed Ellen to the kitchen for more individual talk all the conversation went on in circle. Phœbe was very likely to be busy teaching Matthew or Owen or both of them, or industriously knitting stockings or mittens for someone needing them.

Hardie found her one day with a boy on each side, a book on her knee between them and knitting in her hands. He burst into a laugh. ''I never saw such greed for usefulness.''

''She's feeding her pride every day by showing us how necessary she is to us,'' said Ellen.

Phœbe only smiled with a faint sauciness and went on with her teaching.

''She's the sternest kind of teacher,'' said Ellen. ''Those poor overworked students never have a chance to miss a session. They can get around their weak-minded mother, but she is Hannah More herself.''

Hardie sat and looked at Phœbe while Ellen talked to him and he gave her the news of the settlement. There were no others about today, for once, and the place had more of the aspect of a gentle family scene than it usually had.

The room was of the plainest, though Ellen's sense in choosing comforts to bring with her had given it a semblance of homeliness, even of charm, far above most of the houses of the place. There were real curtains and some pictures and useful cots made to look like couches and a few rugs—now generally laid against cracks at the foot of doors—and even a padded chair or two among the plain furniture. To Hardie, coming from his crowded cold makeshift room, it always looked like the utmost of sweet comfort and homeliness, even though guns, with the precious Sharps rifle, stood in the corner, and a big box containing food which must not freeze and could not be risked in the kitchen, hugged the back of the stove. The most of these temporary homes had a man-made look and a scantiness of furnishing that told of sternly reducing freight to a minimum for the westward journey.

Hardie, sitting in a comfortable chair by an almost competent fire, rested his spirit for the moment. He was busier and busy in a more important way than he allowed them to know. As correspondent for a great New York paper that was friendly to the colony, he had added many other responsibilities to his original one. After days of men's presence, men's insistent argument, men's loud voices and often rough speech, the gentle tones of these women and their light movements reminded him happily that charm still existed in the world.

He answered Ellen absently at last. She looked at him a little quizzically and rose and began to put on gloves and warm jacket.

"Are you going out!" he exclaimed.

"Only to the kitchen. It is several degrees to the north of this. Its fire needs tending."

"Let me," he said, rising.

"By no means. There are other mysteries there you may not put a hand to. Phœbe, do let my sons off before

you overstrain their young minds. And don't sit on the floor, boys."

"I haven't seen you for weeks," said Hardie, quickly leaning toward Phœbe as the door closed on Ellen and the two boys released themselves as with a spring and rushed to natural occupations.

"I'm always here," said Phœbe. His promptness of speech and his tone seemed more intimate, assumed more of relation between them, than had ever been before.

"You can be both here and a thousand miles away—as you are now," he said with discontent.

"I should probably be warmer if I were," said Phœbe, trying to find a practical door of outlet. She moved closer to the fire and put her cold feet on the low fender. The movement brought her nearer to Hardie and he suddenly leaned forward and took her cold hand and kissed it. Phœbe, unmistakably indignant, withdrew her fingers, casting an alarmed glance toward the unobservant Matthew and Owen. Hardie hastily moved to retrieve himself.

"That's for the pioneer," he said humbly and earnestly. "I kiss the hem of your garment daily—your and Mrs. Truman's," he added quickly.

"I'm only borrowing the part," answered Phœbe. "I don't deserve any reverence because I give no stakes. Kansas has no hostages from me. Is it true," she went on promptly, "that Shannon is likely to be recalled?"

Ellen came back reluctantly in a minute to warm her icy fingers, and discover that Phœbe was busy drawing surmises on national politics from Hardie and herself saying nothing of significance.

"She's too much for him," sighed Ellen.

"Do I bother you much?" Hardie asked Ellen when he had made himself into a mountain of wraps ready to depart. "You know this is a rose-bower in an arctic desert for me."

Ellen did not smile at his new and novel humility. "It only troubles us when you don't come," she said earnestly. "We like to share whatever we have with you." She tried to involve Phœbe with her glance and word and succeeded in compelling her to smile in general cordiality.

"How have you instilled such humbleness into that young man so suddenly?" she asked lightly of Phœbe when he was gone.

"I suppose everybody has humble moments," said Phœbe, taking her turn to mend the fire.

XIV

THESE white-ice-bound days moved heavily and prosily to Harvey Sayre. His bright tasks of the summer had all departed, and even good-nature and energetic kindliness could not furnish enough variety of activity to fill his hours. The gratifying excitement of December left him with a taste for more of the kind. He thirsted for further opportunity for active championship of his cause.

"No more colonelling for you until spring opens," said Hardie interpreting his mind.

The leaders of the Free State party were busy enough but Harvey was too young to be taken into their councils or even to do their errands. He hung about Doctor Robinson's path often, admiring his steady courage and his statesman's mind as well as his shrewdness and his occasional grim wit. He made his way to Mrs. Robinson's fireside also and, since the doctor was often absent for days together on territorial business, found services which purchased for him entrance to the talk there. Everyone of importance to Lawrence came to Mrs. Robinson's house. The most mature talk Harvey had heard in his young life went on there, for men brought other interests besides political to the territory.

At other times he put himself in the way of Colonel Jim Lane, who dashed in and out of Lawrence on comet-like orbits. Harvey looked in fascination—which he would have been glad to make emulation—on his picturesqueness of dress and gallant bearing, and lost nothing of the atmosphere of romance and tradition of adventure that enveloped him. "What would have become of such a man after the Mexican war if a place like this hadn't opened up for him?" said Phœbe after the treaty party. And indeed he needed the free air-currents and unestablished

causes of a new country. Had he lived in a time for going out with a standard and a train of knights, half the young men he met would have joined him, and Harvey would have been one of them. Yet the solid leadership of Robinson drew the boy also.

"It's only the accident of periods that puts those two men on the same side," said Hardie, student of temperaments. "If this were the seventeenth century Robinson would be a Roundhead and Lane a Cavalier,—if he hadn't been drowned beforehand looking for the Northwest Passage."

But hero-studying took only a part of Harvey's thought. Much of it went off some cold snowy miles to the southeast, a way which had led him more than once in days of summer and autumn. But what chance of finding anyone riding abroad on a slender pony over these depths of snow? He looked across the weeks until spring should open and wondered how much patience would be possible. He longed to have the high expectation of Phœbe's eyes turned on him again.

He had seen Prescott Miles in Lawrence during the siege, now working fiercely in drilling or digging entrenchments, now talking as fiercely when he could find men to listen. "This is only the beginning—only the beginning!" was his theme. Harvey considered with interest the contrast between his tense dreamy face and visionary look and the shrewdness and sturdy readiness of the typical anti-slavery settler. Several times he had seen Amos and Miles together and discovered a likeness of temper between them. He had last seen Miles in the circle around Brown's box-platform on the day when Brown denounced the treaty, Miles listening in a sort of rapt approbation. Harvey looked across the circle at him and respected the intensity and devotion of his feeling. But when he later saw him waiting for words with Brown, he shook his young head dubiously. He doubted the effect of bringing so much vehemence together.

But since that day he had seen none of the family, and eagerness grew with deprivation. Then one day when the sun shone and the wind dropped and spirits rose and

events in which he could have no part made him restless, he took Widmer and rode boldly forth. Where smooth unbroken stretches of green had lain in the summer, now lay stretches of white as smooth and unbroken. In the summer they had thought the sky as blue as sky could be, but now it seemed even bluer, curving over the spaces of snow. This openness and white spaciousness seemed the right approach to Lydia.

The little farm place was mounded with snow, its roofs rounded and cushioned. No one appeared and Harvey knocked, trying as he did so to reduce his appearing to the semblance of casual neighborliness. The Mileses had not yet taken on the undiscriminating cordiality and hospitality of the new country. For Mrs. Miles social differentiations obviously still existed. Yet she greeted Harvey as pleasantly as if she were opening the door to him on the street of an Ohio town. When she took wagon for the West she had not left the consciousness of a single convention behind. But beyond her courteous and formal smile Lydia's face glowed quick spontaneous welcome, and social uncertainty dropped from Harvey.

"I'm so glad to see you," she said simply. Yet she left the talk in her mother's hands and it followed as regular lines as if no rarity of circumstance attended the place or visit—much of the weather and comparison of general news, all in well-ordered attitude and phrase. Harvey almost forgot to look at Lydia in his surprised examination of a woman like this. The house too, thinly furnished as other houses were, had still an amazing system and order, as if the novel and hard circumstances of this strange place had yet been adapted to the established methods of living in another habitat. She had somehow transplanted her housekeeping with herself. Even her look, solid and fed and combed and well-sewed, might have belonged to a careful matron anywhere. As she sat and neatly mended a coat and asked polite questions, Harvey wondered how Prescott Miles ever got her to come out here.

Once in a while Lydia with a quick phrase or question breathed a warmer feeling or intenser interest into the talk, and the mother smiled, tolerating or accepting. But

her hand still held the reins of conversation. It was not a mealtime, but when Harvey spoke of his ride back Mrs. Miles rose, saying he must have a cup of coffee, and moved to the cookstove at the other side of the room. The room held two stoves. Under the rattle of the metalware and between her continued remarks there were some moments of real speech for Harvey.

"I wondered whether anything would ever bring you this way again," said Lydia readily.

"Something did," answered Harvey. He took the chance to look steadily at her, renewing knowledge of every feature and finding her even lovelier than his memory had told him. Her dark eyes were as eager and expectant as ever. She flushed a little under his words and look.

"Were you in the Wakarusa war?" she asked.

"I'm a veteran of the Wakarusa war," Harvey laughed. "I can show as many scars as anyone."

"I thought you would be. I hoped you wouldn't be hurt but I thought you would be there." She glowed at him as if she were congratulating him on attaining an honor. "Father was disappointed. The next time it will turn out differently."

Harvey did not question her hope. Question was far from him as he looked at her. He wished he had done valiant deeds for the cause, to justify him in accepting this high look from her.

The mother brought him a cup of coffee and a slice of dark bread and molasses—"as if I were a youngster," he thought—and gave it to him without apology. Most women made jokes about the limitations of the food they offered, and he had heard Ellen often season her plain hospitality with gay jests. But Mrs. Miles said nothing. Harvey took it from her hands and ate as if honored. There had suddenly come into his mind a suspicion that he might have made a mistake regarding Mrs. Miles.

As he drained the cup and set it down there was a step outside and Prescott Miles entered, with the hasty movements with which all had learned to exclude cold by a quickly closed door. He had evidently ridden up at the back of the house and they had not seen him. He

threw a little pile of prairie chickens on the floor and Mrs. Miles with housewifely promptness picked them up and put them aside. He greeted Harvey politely, even hospitably, as he unwound wraps and his wife and Lydia came up for warmer greeting. But he was preoccupied, and they too seemed to wait for some kind of information from him. He took a cup of the coffee ready and drank it off almost without a pause. He looked around as he set it down.

"This is a comfortable place compared with those I have been in," he said. "They have earth floors and walls of sheds—mere sheds. I have been to the place of John Brown and his sons, near Osawatomie," he explained to Harvey. "Their food is scarce also. I was reluctant even to eat a meal of their provisions."

Lydia drew in a breath of pity and exultation. "How brave they are!" she said.

"The Browns had just been driving off a claim-jumper over there—sent him clear off."

"Was there fighting?"

"No—he went without fighting. Said he'd come back and fight some other day," he said grimly. "It was all over before I got there."

Miles was silent a minute. Then he spoke in tense excitement. "Had you heard of the killing of Captain Reese Brown at Leavenworth?"

Harvey knew. It was known in Lawrence days ago. That was a part of what caused the restlessness which had sent him out on a ride today. Lydia's eager look demanded the tale and her father told it. It was evident that in this house no fact connected with the cause was kept from women's ears.

"The mayor of Leavenworth forbade the Free State men to hold the election there on the fifteenth and they held it out at Easton. The pro-slavery men from Leavenworth tried to break it up and there was fighting. Then the Kickapoo Rangers came and took Brown as he was going back home to Leavenworth. They didn't shoot him. They killed him—awfully." He shuddered. He was no teller for such a tale as this. It was no tale for Lydia to hear, Harvey thought fiercely. It seemed to him he would have

risen and forbidden the horrible details, had Miles been ready to tell them. A girl should not hear such a thing. Even with this, her eyes were deep with horror.

"What can we do?" she cried. "Oh, why aren't all men fighting!"

"We will be soon," said her father with fire. "There are men here who will lead us into battle!"

Harvey felt almost sluggish and indifferent beside this mounting eagerness. It seemed to him as he wrapped himself for his returning ride, that he ought to say something committing himself to their devotion and purpose. But the restraint and caution of another theory withheld him. He went away with a warm look from Lydia, and from her parents an absent-minded invitation to return.

XV

THIS story which Miles referred to, the tale of Reese Brown's murder, had stirred Lawrence several days ago. Harvey could not bring himself to speak of it before Lydia and her mother when he was offering them his small gift of news. The manner of killing had been such as would have shamed savages. Yet the papers of Leavenworth had gloried in the act. On the morning of that day the *Kickapoo Banner* had called, "Sound the bugle of war over the length and breadth of the land, and leave not an abolitionist in the territory to relate their treacherous and contaminating deeds. Strike your piercing rifle-balls and your glittering steel to their black and poisonous hearts! Let the war-cry never cease in Kansas again until our territory is wrested of the last vestige of abolitionism." Now the ground of Vice-president Atchison and the Stringfellows was almost a unit in its satisfaction in this resulting deed.

Harvey might have added to Miles' news if he had wished. He had seen a party of the militia take their arms at the call of Easton and march away to the help of the Free State men there. No one knew what danger they were offering themselves to. All the forces of Leavenworth were behind that attack. Hardie had gone with them, though he did not belong to the company. Harvey today had information regarding him and he put a long curve into his homeward way to allow him to stop at the Trumans' with it, for he knew that they had not been down into the village for several days. Perhaps John too had public news that did not come to his less important self.

The sitting-room was full. It was sometimes amazing how many people could get into this little place. Someone was almost sure to bring every newcomer of interest out to make acquaintance with the Trumans and Phœbe

Murray. So on almost any day not too stormy one could hear a summary of territorial conditions set forth for the information of a fresh arrival. Today Bute Van Gundy, newly come from New York and not yet inured to the climate, was settled by the stove accepting hot drinks from Ellen and Phœbe alternately while he offered them cosmopolitan talk and curiously observed their quality. Two youngsters who had with difficulty persuaded the settlement that they were old enough to be well on in their honeymoon, had been rescued temporarily from the earthen floor and shag walls of their claim cabin and brought in for warmth and practical instruction. The youth, just from the Harvard Law School, was going to practice law as soon as he had his claim proved up on. He was rather surprised to find other lawyers here before him, but not at all surprised to find that the plentiful supply of arms which he had brought with him and had managed to pass through covetous Westport, had a use all ready for them. The two young things talked abolition with an ardor that was at once rich and pathetic to those older, and older in the place.

His rifle now stood in the corner with John's several guns and he was busy polishing and oiling a revolver which, he explained, would always be kept at home for Mary's use. Mary smiled her girlish smile and Philip went on to tell what a good shot she was already. The stranger looked at her curiously and John reflected tenderly on the amazing adaptation of women who came to this country—women whose whole habit of mind before this had been as remote as could be from brutality of life or need for physical courage.

Ellen dropped quizzical motherly eyes on the two of them. "Did you two children know what you were coming to?" she asked.

"Oh, I love it!" cried Mary.

"Let me assure you, Mrs. Truman," began Philip with an absurd little formal earnestness, "that apart from this ungrateful climate—"

"It wasn't like this last winter," put in Harvey.

"Apart from that we are pleased with everything here.

I hope Mary won't have to shoot any one because I would rather not think of her shooting, but if she does it will be because it is her duty. The fact is," he went on ingenuously, "we looked at all the outfits of duties we saw around home and we decided to establish our place where there was an entirely new set. Mary's grandmother brought her up and my grandfather brought me up and we both struck out to find the newest thing we could find. Of course if they hadn't both been Abolitionists we couldn't have come." He applied an eye to the barrel of the revolver. "But having your house burned down in Massachusetts and having it burned down in Kansas looked to them a good deal the same. Only there you would have a better house to burn down. How's this, dearest?" He handed the shining weapon over to her and she examined it with serious attention.

Van Gundy opened amazed eyes upon this marvellous combination of elements. The others looked amused, but after a season in the territory nothing in personality could really surprise them.

"Were you in the village today, John?" asked Harvey.

"No. I hear they came back from Easton without any fighting."

"Yes. They came last night."

"How is Lewis Hardie?" asked Ellen, interrupting them. Hardie had a few days before been really ill with a hard cold.

Harvey hesitated. "Is he worse?" asked Ellen, and then quickly, "He didn't go to Easton? He wasn't fit!"

"His rifle is here," said John, as if arguing for the presence of Hardie. The faith the Free State men put in their rifles was equalled only by the Missourians' fear of them. Eastern supporters made tremendous efforts to get these new and potent weapons through the Missouri lines and to the anti-slavery men. It seemed improbable that a man should go off on such a trip as this and leave his rifle behind.

"He went in a hurry," Harvey explained. "The men didn't want him to go and at the last minute he took Mat Helmer's musket and went along."

"How foolhardy!" cried Ellen in annoyance. "He was about ready to go to bed himself!" Phœbe also looked serious and John disturbed.

"I take a new-comer's privilege of inquiry," said Van Gundy with interest. "Are you troubled because your friend went out with a sore throat or because he went on a dangerous expedition?"

Ellen laughed. "To new-comers—unless they are as keen abolitionists as we are—our perspective is insane."

"To go to the rescue of Easton was only natural for men like Hardie," said John gravely. "We are only sorry to have him add unnecessarily to his risk."

"He said he wanted to look into the newspaper situation in Leavenworth," Harvey explained. In spite of their seriousness everyone laughed. The Leavenworth papers were as notorious as the place. The only Free State printing press had been thrown into the Missouri about a month before, and the *Kickapoo Ranger* now summarized Leavenworth journalism.

"You know," Ellen explained to Van Gundy, "for one of us to go to Leavenworth is about as safe as to move in to keep house with an octopus."

"But I understand that those men all came back last night," Van Gundy persisted.

"Jove!" exclaimed Philip Livingstone, "I'll be glad when I know enough about the country to go out like that."

"Hardie wasn't with them," Harvey acknowledged as the others looked at him inquiringly. "He stopped at Hutsons' over across the river, and Stivers stayed with him. He was shot in the arm, but only a flesh wound—no bone broken. But Done Riley told me about it this morning —said Hardie didn't want anything said about it."

"But I thought there was no fighting," said Van Gundy.

"Not enough to kill a cat. That's what makes Hardie so mad, I guess. There was nothing to fight when they got there, not even leavings. Riley wanted to go on to Leavenworth but the others thought that would be foolish. So they were starting back and Hardie was coming along behind, trying to look around a little more, for something to write about, I suppose, when somebody shot at him

from behind a stack. They couldn't find anybody though."

"Infernal!" There was exclamation from all. One of their own household, almost, had been drawn on by an assassin. Mary Livingstone's slender hand closed about her revolver.

"We ought to go back and burn up the town!" Philip spoke fiercely.

"And you've known this all day, Harvey!" cried Ellen.

"There was nothing to do," said Harvey. "He didn't want much said and he will be in soon. A lot of us wanted to go right back over there and wipe out the place, but Doctor Robinson told them it wouldn't do."

"Sportsmanlike enemies you have," commented the visitor. "You must weep over your fallen foes." He looked scornful.

"There are not many noble Percy and Douglas scenes," said John Truman slowly. "But at the same time you must remember that we are open enemies. This is warfare of a sort. It is not just that we are disagreeing factions in a community. You are thinking of it, as some still do even here, as if a man shot at a political opponent from an alley corner. It isn't that. When a body of our men take arms and go to a pro-slavery camp like Easton, they must expect to be met with arms."

"From behind haystacks, while they are withdrawing peaceably?" said Phœbe. A bright spot glowed in each cheek.

"Would you have us do that?" demanded Harvey indignantly. "Even if they are earning it?"

"I should hate to be allied with men that did it," answered John, definitely but judicially. "But you must remember that this is now guerilla warfare and it has no laws. Our worst outrages will probably come from the fact that there is no line between citizens and soldiers in this kind of fighting. But I think we only suffer more in our own minds when we are unfair to the enemy, or when we are furious over the unlawfulness of a thing to which no recognized law applies."

The younger men listened scarcely with patience.

"There is always the law of decency," said Harvey indignantly.

"Yes," said John. "That is more custom and civilization than law. And some of our enemies don't have it."

His spirit dominated the little group, even with its consciousness of the wounded friend waiting over beyond the river. He spoke gravely, but with a kind of serenity also. Owen seated on his knee was playing with him as he spoke. Ellen glowed upon him from her seat in the background—it being the first duty of the hostess to take the coldest seat. "My great man! He will always be bigger than the special case," she said to herself. But she guessed also with what effort it was that he forced himself to this judgment.

"You Free Soilers take high ground," said the newcomer, more earnestly than he had yet spoken. A moment of silence fell upon the older ones, broken only by Owen's persistent chatter to his father.

"I wish we had Lewis Hardie here," said Ellen anxiously. And even Phœbe showed a sympathetic anxiety.

"I don't think he is very badly hurt, according to Riley," said Harvey, rising to take a last "warm" by the stove before his ride into the village. "But it does make one rage, in spite of John."

XVI

HARDIE was not very badly hurt. Even while they at the Truman house were talking about him and troubling about him, he was riding into Lawrence and Stivers was hunting for Doctor Tracy for him and finding only Doctor Malott, self-named doctor it was surmised, who made a clumsy dressing with his dirty hands and asked cautious questions about Easton. He was suspected of being not quite right on the goose, and the men gave reserved answers.

John was in the village in the early morning, ready to cross the river to bring his friend home if it were necessary. But he found Hardie, his arm in a fantastic sling, sauntering across the street from a late breakfast at Mrs. Bower's.

"Well, thank God!" John exclaimed. Under his logical talk of yesterday there had really been profound anxiety. Tragedy had not come so close to his own circle before. Worse than anger might have been involved.

"Oh yes," laughed Hardie. "My enemy was mad nor' nor'west and only winged me." John's hand trembled a little as he touched the wounded arm and inquired regarding it. But Fraser and Stivers joined them and Hardie and Stivers gave a jocular telling of their adventure with shrewd surmises regarding affairs in Leavenworth.

Hugh Fraser's attention presently left the story and Hardie's look followed it to a man who had just entered the village and was riding slowly along looking from building to building. The Free State Hotel near which they were standing especially engaged his eye. He was so coated and muffled that it was hard to penetrate to the man. But as he came opposite them Fraser spoke up clearly and cordially, "Hello, Jones!"

If a bundle of clothing could look taken aback this one did. But it answered gruffly, "Hello!"

"Any letters for us?" pursued Fraser. "Thought maybe you were distributing the Missouri mail as it was hard for us to come after it."

He sauntered out to stand in front of Jones' horse and the others nonchalantly followed. Other men appeared, with sudden understanding, from doors of buildings near by and looked on with interest or with the unfailing humor of the settlement.

"Going to arrest anybody today, Sheriff?" asked Roger Stivers jauntily.

The officer of the law growled somewhat inarticulately behind his wrappings.

"Maybe this isn't your season for arresting."

"I see some of you that will be arrested before long," snarled Jones. Stivers had raised his hand to the horse's bridle but Fraser quickly drew it back.

"Well, don't neglect us when you are out doing your official duty," he said. "We don't want to be treated as if we were outside the law."

The group separated to let the horse through and Jones went on his way to Lecompton. No one could tell how conscious he was of the kind of regard with which they followed him.

The jocularity was none of John's. Hardie laughed with the others as they went into the Cincinnati House to talk and exchange surmise on Jones' business. But John was silent and serious. Every man there while he joked knew that the passings of Jones were not merely his personal affairs but told of further plans of his directors along the border.

"We'd better get our crops in early this spring," said Fraser, who held a claim and was trying in the midst of this bitter weather to put up a house to which he could bring his wife in the spring. He had left it at the foundation when called to the defense of Lawrence the first of December, and had been holding his claim "baching" on it in the merest shack of a floorless structure which he called the cold substance of things hoped for. Men like him and John Truman wondered at and admired each other without realizing their similarity of type.

"You'd better. Jones may harvest you yet," Hardie answered him.

Hardie added his information to their surmises and produced his copies of Atchison's manifesto and Stringfellow's paper and other utterances. Doctor Robinson, now generally called Governor though he had not yet taken the oath of office, under the Topeka constitution, went briskly past the window and then seeing the group within returned to join them and listen to their news and comments. He ended with inquiry regarding Hardie's wound, and by means of this drew him and John aside while the talk of the other men went on without them.

"Hardie," he said, "you are from the west of your state, I believe."

"Originally. I have been back there a good deal always."

"Do you know the Congressmen—Ripley and Mason?"

"Yes—Ripley very well, Mason more or less. I know Ripley's son and Mason's younger brother. I read law briefly in Governor Whitcomb's office before literature lured me and I did newspaper work at the capital one winter and picked up a good many acquaintances in a way."

"There's a job for you. You could get a hearing with these men?"

"Yes, a hearing at least, I think. And I have some newspaper acquaintance in New York and Philadelphia."

"All the better. We have got to get the truth to as many men as possible somehow. Could you go back and see as many men as you can and simply tell them the facts? We've got to get at some of them that way. To send men back from here is the best thing we can do for the present. Letters and pamphlets are not enough, and they don't reach the men we want them to and aren't always believed when they do. I want a safe way of sending papers to Washington and Boston, besides."

"I might do it," said Hardie thoughtfully. "My paper wanted me to come back for a few weeks anyway. I'll consider."

"You will come out with me," said John, his hand on

Hardie's shoulder. "We will take care of you for a day or two. Ellen and Phœbe want to pet the hero."

The strain of the last two days had brought Hardie's feelings near to the surface, and his blue eyes gleamed in response. Pioneer though he was he carried always a gentle surface never entirely hardened to the rough life he had adopted. After even so brief an expedition as this he found himself eagerly ready for the warm gentleness of the Truman home and the children's light voices and the grace of Ellen's ways and John's quiet intelligent friendship. And Phœbe!—he was no carpet knight and took no credit to himself for this small martial episode, but would her eyes glow warmer at sight of his wounded arm?

But Phœbe's eyes showed only a keen and friendly solicitude. It was no use to try to catch her off her guard, for there was too obviously no guard and nothing to screen. When the first words were over she fell behind Ellen in expressiveness. Ellen insisted on seeing the bandaged arm and bathing and re-dressing it, discarding with scorn the coarse and clumsy bandages of Doctor Malott. Hardie relaxed his manly indifference to hurt far enough to settle into barefaced enjoyment of this gentle tendance, rare enough in his present experience.

John eyed him humorously from the other side of the stove. "You look like a cat, Hardie, with somebody gently pleasing its backbone."

Ellen and Phœbe were both eager with questions and Hardie indulged himself in full though jocular answer. But while Ellen's questions and ejaculations were personal —"What did you do next?" and "How did you feel then?"—Phœbe would follow after a moment or two with a general inquiry of the import of events. It almost seemed as if Ellen were eager to put him in the place of a hero, and he was weak enough for the moment to wish to have one at least think him that.

But in a minute he tossed all that aside and minimized it with jocular phrases, and finally got away from the subject. He was ashamed to acknowledge his dissatisfaction.

"What is this?" he asked, picking up a book from the table.

"The newest Dickens," said Ellen. "One of Phœbe's Boston mourners sent it to her and the Missouri authorities let it through, seeing it was only a book and they had no use for it. We are reading it a chapter at a time and can't read unless everybody is here and everybody is on honor not to look at it between-times. Even the owner of the book can't look ahead."

"You see while you make history other men make books," said Phœbe softly. There was a gleam of satisfaction for him in that, but it quickly ended.

Ellen left the talk at a light moment and slipped away to prepare tea, John and Hardie having dined slightly in town and this being an unusual occasion, to sacrifice precious China tea for. She hoped that Hardie would be apt enough to seclude a conversation for himself, while John played with the boys. He did, but he found it to be all about these books and their content, Phœbe deferring pleasingly to his literary judgment and then modestly offering her own. With Ellen or John he had the satisfying feeling of walking side by side in conversation; but Phœbe in talk seemed to be always flitting ahead.

He restlessly tried to find a personal bypath to take, but he found each way gently screened. It did not add to his satisfaction in this to suspect that it was merely a social adroitness which Phœbe had learned in experience. In gloomy imagination he saw her raising subtle and kindly barriers against a long series of admirers, even lovers, and he only one in such a line.

They had their tea, served by Ellen with burlesque touches in exaggerated stimulation of old-time custom, with Phœbe lightly abetting her. It amazed him endlessly to see how they could bring the charm which leisure and ease had developed in another world, into this—and yet lose nothing of practical usefulness in it. The Babes on the Prairie, as they had nicknamed Mary and Philip Livingstone, had been out for a brisk walk on the snow—"You know we just have to get off by ourselves once in a while," said Philip—and now returned. They circled about the tea-serving with acclaim, it being no daily occasion, and Philip took it on himself to assist, with much gentlemanly

manner and such names as toasted muffin and pound cake for the salt-rising bread and thinly-spread butter.

"It makes you feel like home," he said with a pleasurable sigh, but added promptly, "But I wouldn't be back there for anything, would you, Mary?"

"You New Englanders are all atavistic," said Hardie. "The third and fourth generation feel Plymouth Rock under foot and a cause to hold by."

"It isn't just that," said Philip, "but you know I have a lot of theories"—the others reserved their tender smiles at youthfulness—"and I hold that every man has a right to fight once anyway, just as he has a right to be in love once. Of course he ought to do his fighting first"—"I don't think so," said Mary, sipping her tea—"but I saw Mary first. Of course I'd have wanted to come ont here to hold Kansas even if I hadn't had any theory. Won't you have another piece of fruit-cake, Miss Murray?" He rose to offer her buttered bread with a sweeping bow.

Hardie saw Ellen's eyes suddenly turn misty as she looked at the boy, bowing his slender figure and charming fair head gallantly before Phœbe and then turning a jolly inclusive glance on Mary as he set the plate down. Hardie summarized the elements here—the rude pioneer setting, meager and rough, the charm of person and manner brought from an older place and a life that had won ease for itself, the light talk that had brave purpose behind it, the sober pioneer John watching in the background, the active danger, no fancy but reality, enveloping them all about. No one knew how close it might be at this moment to the merry scene. And no one present lacked awareness of that—not Ellen, with her care-taking of everyone, not Phœbe, alert to every sign of state issues, not Mary, ingenuous and rosy but daily in her mind buckling on her lover's harness and sending him forth. Well, it was for him to do all that came to his hands. He rose reluctantly and began to take his wraps to himself.

"I am saying goodbye for a few weeks," he said. "I'm starting east."

"Mr. Hardie!" cried Ellen. They all stopped in surprise and disturbance. To go across Missouri now was no

lightsome matter. And no boats ran in midwinter. One was half safe when once on a boat. Yet no one really protested. He added, "I have business there," and left John to explain later as much as was necessary.

When he left Governor Robinson he had not yet fully decided to undertake the trip, doubting whether he had any weight or authority that would give value to his errand. Yet his second thought had been that if he was chosen to go he should go. Strangely enough this light scene with its half-face still turned to danger, was doing more to send him out than the Governor's words had done.

"Hadn't you better wait a few days to see how your arm turns out?" said John seriously. Aside from that risk he approved of Hardie's going.

"Oh, he'll make a fine figure addressing an anti-slavery meeting with his arm in a sling and telling them who shot him!" cried Philip Livingstone.

So after their first hesitation they set him on his way with jollity and many messages to the East, political and personal, and Hardie was committed to his journey. As he rode away he told himself that it was better. What man had a right in these days to loving or making love? Even if he could win anything from Phœbe Murray, what could he now do with it? He must stay here until all affairs were settled—and perhaps after this in some other place that equally needed him. He found himself increasingly absorbed, not only in the destiny of this land of Kansas but in the whole result of this war against slavery. He was not by any natural call a crusader but he found himself more and more a citizen. How could he now form any new tie of place or relation? Love—if it was love—must wait, however hard the waiting.

Yet as he rode down toward Lawrence, resting in the cold soft pink light from the western sky, his spirit rose to the prospect of new adventure before him and the chance for his individual contribution of personal risk to the cause.

Ellen Truman, at this moment ingeniously finding means to isolate herself and John for a few rare minutes of talk by themselves, would have told Hardie that he was not

half in love yet if practical considerations said that he might or might not love. She knew, or thought she knew, that months of vivid and vigorous living with all her feelings in exercise and danger encircling all that belonged to her, and perhaps difference in thought between her and John, had taught her more of loving than all the summery years before.

Her optimistic insistence in the autumn that the danger they were facing could not be of the worst nature, and that after all these enemies were only human beings and Americans at that and opposed to the Free State settlers only on a political point—that insistence had given way gradually to a very different conviction. She had sat by young Barber's wife at his funeral in the rude dining-room of the unfinished hotel. She had seen Mrs. Wood cooking and caring for the militia while her husband was far away in some unknown hiding. She had heard the stories of Marchall, of Fillmore, the fearful story of Captain Reese Brown; she guessed at other tales that were not told her. She acknowledged a greater danger and a more revolting possibility than she had dreamed of in her high-spirited leaving of Massachusetts. What might yet happen to John in his way of duty?—to her home?—to her sons?

And for John and his duty—ah, what was duty? An outrage like this at Easton seemed to sweep him into an impetuous answer that demanded responding violence. But steadily he strove once more against that impulse, fixing his eye on a citizenship larger than any strife and taking to his heart more and more the state to be. During these weeks when the fearful cold hampered factional activity and prevented concerted movements, he occupied himself largely with the neighborly helpfulness which was always a near duty to him. He took long cold rides to inquire into the state of isolated settlers or to carry them help or bring them into safer conditions. He was quick as Ellen to divide their stores or their fireside. His tall figure and friendly eyes became known to more than one lonely house. And he gave serene answer in many a heated argument, when his word was on the side of steadiness and reasonableness.

It was not all with ease, however. There were other days, many of them still, when the story of Reese Brown or of Fillmore made his blood boil and his whole spirit rise in question. Was steady endurance after all the only part of the Free State men? Often there arose in him a contradiction of feeling and purpose which, though he controlled his words steadily, made him seem far from himself in Ellen's studying eyes.

Miles across the hills, down at Osawotamie, lived a man who held the theory of warfare. When spring came and riding was clear he would go to see him.

XVII

BUT spring had not yet opened when the first of March came and men from all about Lawrence rode to Topeka to see the sitting of the Free State legislature and the administering of the oath of office to the state officers elected in January. Deep quiet excitement prevailed among them all. There was a challenge in the act more general, more thorough than in anything yet undertaken. This was saying practically what the Free State men had already proclaimed, that the pro-slavery administration was a bogus one—"bogus" laws, "bogus" legislature—elected at a bogus election—that was always the phrase of the anti-slavery men.

What would be the outcome of this session no one could yet tell. Threats had been borne west from the Missouri line, telling what would be the result of going through this form of state-making. Companies of militia were forming and parading on the border. In Washington President Pierce had in January issued a message to Congress supporting the pro-slavery legislature and declaring it legal, no matter what the election that had brought it into being. About the middle of February the President again opened his lips to emphasize his earlier words and to say that the Federal Government warranted none of the Free State organization and put the troops at Fort Riley and Fort Leavenworth at the disposal of Governor Shannon. Indeed from the perspective of Washington the situation in the territory might have presented a curious spectacle; a state with two legislatures, each denying the authority of the other, two temporary capitals, a governor and equipment of state officers elected by the people and a territorial governor appointed by the President, a constitution framed by one constitutional convention and another constitution expeditiously borrowed outright from a neighboring state

by the opposing convention. "Two Popes would be nothing to it," said Roger Stivers.

News of the President's last proclamation reached Kansas only a few days before the day for opening the legislature at Topeka. Free State men could, they thought, have dispensed with his paternal words. Leavenworth and Lecompton were pleased with them. Said the jolly *Squatter Sovereign*, "In our opinion"—Editorial authority was not slow in reaching Kansas—"the only effectual way to correct the evils that now exist is to hang up to the nearest tree the very last traitor who was instrumental in getting up or participating in, the celebrated Topeka convention." And no doubt Leavenworth thought the paper spoke with restraint. "The Shortest Way with Dissenters," said John Truman, "Political utterance repeats itself."

It is no wonder that men looked forward thoughtfully to this day and that many serious men, like John Truman, put pistols in belt or pocket or boot and rode soberly to Topeka on March fourth, along the willow-lined Kaw.

They rode back less soberly a few days later, for after all the anti-slavery legislature met and organized itself and saw its officers take oath of office and listened to the new Governor's address and seriously selected James Lane and Andrew Reeder for senators when the time should come to entitle Kansas to representation in the Senate, and finally adjourned, all without active molestation. Pro-slavery men went in groups to Topeka and the dark scowling face of Sheriff Jones looked in at the meeting and was seen up and down the Topeka streets. John watched him distantly for some hours but he seemed to be only keeping a restless malignant espionage, with no purpose defined. Indeed Sheriff Jones had so great an opinion of the will to war of the Free State forces that he would not have ventured to forbid the session without a thousand men at his heels.

Hugh Fraser, strolling the expectant street at John's side, smiled satirically at Jones as he rode truculently by.

"Supinely reigns," he said. Fraser read classical poets when more excitement was not promising. "Jones can't

take a bite of pie without seeming to threaten to arrest and hang the pie."

"Wouldn't you like to see him stamp in and prorogue Parliament?" said John. "He's cast for a stormy Cromwell."

"A fizzing and spitting Cromwell."

"Jones is all right," said Roger Stivers. "He just moves in a dream. He's been going to arrest somebody ever since I came to Kansas and he hasn't arrested anybody yet. It's just an hallucination."

After that seriously expectant ride in the early morning the men felt light-hearted and even John joined in the humor. Mose Litener, an obscure hanger-on of Free State men—"useful to do the cussin' for decenter men," said Stivers—edged up and asked them to drink. Fraser and Truman, not drinking men, quietly refused and Stivers merely grinned quizzically at Litener.

"Litener," he said, "fifty-six ladies of Topeka have sent a petition to the legislature asking it to forbid the sale of intoxicating drinks in this state of Kansas. Slavery and whiskey are going to walk out hand in hand. If you are going to get drunk do it now before it is too late."

Litener swore maledictions on the notion and lighter ones on the ladies conceiving it and proceeded as if to take Stivers' advice.

The street was quiet enough to suit even a sheriff and the men presently edged their way into the hall where the sixty-six legislators sat, listening to Governor Robinson's address. The Governor stood on a rude platform reading carefully from a manuscript. " . . . Americans can suffer death but not dishonor; and sooner than the people will consent to recognize the edicts of lawless invaders as laws, their blood will be mingled with the waters of the Kansas, and this Union be rolled together in civil strife." Men moved a little in their places, exchanging covenanting glances with each other.

John leaned his tall frame against the wall at the side and looked down at the faces of the men and then at the serious face and noble head of Governor Robinson. No

consciousness of office hung about him or any newly-added dignity.

"He isn't thinking of himself as a governor," thought John, "only as a sign that we are going to have the one we want when we are ready."

The appointments were all of the rudest and the new officers perhaps held their unaccustomed places clumsily. John involuntarily thought of the noble building and orderly circumstance of legislation in his own state, and smiled a little. Then he looked again at these men, some roughly dressed, many ungroomed and wearing the marks of a long hard ride, many bearing arms. There were few hands there that had not learned to curve about gun-barrel or trigger. No such legislature was meeting in any other state on this day.

Some of these men, it was known, had but simple education; some had all of cultivation that their country could give; some were finer, some coarser. But all, as they grimly faced the platform and awaited what was before them, bore a common mark, the forming mark of resolve, of single immovable purpose and willingness to sacrifice, even in fighting. A man of ignoble purpose might turn aside from that body of eyes. John Truman, as others had done, thought of his grandfather, of thinly-clad troops marching frozen roads, and of half-armed men meeting the regular companies of Europe. Their faces must have borne something of the look of these men. He wished that after all he had taken the chance that was urged upon him, to be one of this body. In this undisturbed hour, with no pistol-shot crossing law-making process, the whole problem looked simpler than it had in December, when the wrath of those days of Wakarusa warfare was in his veins and he still bore in his arms the feel of Barber's body as he carried it to the wagon in that early gray morning.

The Governor had reached his last paragraph. "It is understood that the deputy marshal has private instructions to arrest the members of the Legislature and the state officers, for treason, as soon as this address is received by you. In such an event, of course, no resistance will be offered to the officer. Men who are ready to defend their

own and their country's honor with their lives, can never object to a legal investigation into their actions, nor to suffer any punishment their conduct may merit. We should be unworthy the constituency we represent, did we shrink even from martyrdom on the scaffold, or at the stake, did duty require it. Should the blood of Coleman and Dow, of Barber and Brown, be insufficient to quench the thirst of the President and his accomplices, in the hollow mockery of 'squatter sovereignty' they are practicing on the people of Kansas, then more victims must be furnished. Let what will come, not a finger should be raised against the federal authority, until there shall be no hope of relief except in revolution.

"The task imposed upon us is a difficult one; but with mutual cooperation and a firm reliance on His wisdom who makes 'the wrath of men to praise Him,' we may hope to inaugurate a government that shall not be unworthy of the country and the age in which we live."

Men who looked in each other's eyes or took the hands of friends as they moved from their places, did so with the air of making a pledge. John felt himself solemnly acquiescing, as if present at the taking of a vow.

XVIII

SO John Truman and his friends rode calmly back from Topeka after a few days and, March now blowing mild and nearing its Ides, set about opening their season for farming. Almost before they could realize it, used as they were to the deliberate reluctant springs of coast states, the snowy sheet had changed to a vague veiling of greenness, as if saying that this wild winter had been only a testing of their fiber and would never happen again in this place. All in a moment the earth rushed to greet summer, through quick changes of growth and color —past almost before they were realized.

Ellen threw open door and window and urged all the world of air and sun and smell to enter. After all, now that it was over, the winter had been hard to endure.

"I never had such a housing up in all my days. Now we'll go at living again. And you, young woman, you're going home!"

"Just when you are beginning to have a good time. You're an inhospitable vixen."

"I don't care what your family and all the rest of the Murrays and Trumans will say to you, but what will they think of me? I may want to go back there some day. When my two sons are grown I shall take them back to visit and I shall want somebody in Massachusetts to speak to us."

"Aunt Lucina always gives her big parties as soon as Lent is over," said Phœbe argumentatively. "She says she does it for me."

Ellen looked at her and laughed. Phœbe, neat as ever excepting her hands, was taking her share of farming by "eyeing" precious potatoes, carefully separating them into polyhedrons, each with important germinating eye. She had discovered that it was a thing which must be done and

calmly undertaken it, arranging with Amos before anyone else knew of her enterprise.

"Aunt Lucina's parties," Ellen jested. "I wish they could see you. But really, Phœbe," she urged conscientiously.

"I should like to stay longer," said Phœbe. "I'd like to see all this out. And when I get back there once I don't know when I can come out here again. Ellen, I love my home and everything there and some days I have wanted it tremendously, especially those cold shut-in days that lasted so long. But I'll be ten times more home-sick than that when I get back there. I'm glad I have that place. If I didn't I should want it and want just the sort of relations to things that I have there. But I want a difference too. You know how good bread dough feels—elastic and light and 'fozy'—and how a loaf feels after it has been baked. Well, this life out here feels like the dough. And I couldn't even have used that figure before you taught me to help you. But I suppose I'll have to go back."

"You were made for this adventure," said Ellen looking her over with admiration.

"No, it isn't only adventure for me any more than it is for you," said Phœbe soberly. "But I want to see what else is going to happen out here. When worst comes to worst I defend myself—and you too, my dear—with the example of my Indian-shooting great-grandmother. But it isn't just curiosity either," she added, more serious than she often was when she spoke of herself, "it is the kind of thing that is going to happen I am interested in. Ellen—I don't think I am more interested in anything that can happen to me in this world, than in having the right state made out here. It's not just slavery—I wasn't so much interested in abolition before I came out here—but the spirit that is fighting and the men that are here. Nobody knows what might grow in a state that was started this way, with these people. I would like to stay to see these men fight if they must fight. Look at John! I am greater myself since I came here. I don't suppose I could ever have the fortune to help them. But I wish I could stay."

She ended with a wistfulness unlike Phœbe, and Ellen

threw impulsive arms about her. "You do help!" she cried. "You make every man you look at stand and deliver greatness. You are in it as much as if you carried a Sharps. But I suppose you will have to go back." She sighed her own sigh also at the thought of lonely hours without Phœbe.

But after all, the urgent and authoritative call from Massachusetts did not come. Instead came a trembling and hurried letter based on some newspaper accounts of troubles along the Missouri, bidding the adventurer stay until a body-guard of prowess, such as the territorial Governor himself, could bring her in safety out of Egypt. Ellen and Phœbe laughed a little over the letter and Ellen read its tremulous phrases to some of their visitors to show them, she said, how much worse things might be. Some of the men did not laugh much at this contrasted point of view.

"The fact is," said one, "it is not that they over-estimate the conditions out here but that they underestimate the women who are to meet them." He was a newcomer who spoke, like Philip Livingstone a lawyer but not like him an unfledged one—a slender, acute-looking man with hair early gray and a carefulness in dress which withstood even the conditions of living he found. "My proposal, as an observer, would be to collect all the women and children here, organize the whole settlement into a body-guard for them, and conduct them through Missouri and put them on the train for home, wherever that is, until all this is over—and then come back and fight it all out at once."

"The only trouble about your gallant plan is that you don't yet know the women," said John Truman quietly.

Phœbe listening catalogued some of them in her mind, beginning with little great-spirited Mrs. Robinson, shining like a star in her hilltop home above the town, and Mrs. Sam Wood, gallantly bearing alone the hard burden of the winter with anxiety for her absent husband added to that; Mrs. Holcombe, gentle and quiet and immovable, who had once held off claim-jumpers at the point of her husband's rifle; Mrs. Watson, brave and calm and steady; all the women she knew who had bravely, even gaily, endured the earth floors and thin walls and hateful food

of the winter, and loss of remittances and sharp anxiety for their husbands out under arms; and last of all, she thought, golden Ellen. Could women like these be conducted back to an easier life?

But Judge Sayle looked questioning. "Surely women should not be subjected to this. Wouldn't it be better to fight it all out completely and then begin the home-making?"

"You may not believe it, Judge," said Hugh Fraser, "a large part of the world doesn't—but we are not looking for fighting. We are going to take what is put into our hands and we keep our guns loaded, but we are not even throwing down the gauntlet. We are making a state." Jessie Fraser, they all knew, was on her way out to the now completed house. With what denial of feeling her husband spoke, they could guess.

The Judge persisted. "But why not take the initiative—?" and with that the argument began. Phœbe had heard it so often that she could have carried on the debate herself on either side, and yet she listened avidly always. Should Free State men open up fighting or should they not? John Truman's quiet voice always said the most steadying thing that was to be said, and others often seemed to be chattering until that was spoken.

However, Phœbe was to stay, how long no one could guess now. She kept her signs of pleasure in reasonable bounds. Her mother, apparently supposing feminine wants the same everywhere and more trustful of the authorities along the border than she had reason to be, sent out a box of new spring wear for her, with some additions for Ellen, and by some chance it passed the volunteer examiners at Westport and reached Lawrence intact. It was a matter for jest, since many more necessary articles had stuck at the border.

"They haven't as good taste in dress as they have in firearms," said John. A box of Sharps rifles had been held up by authorities along the river and Lawrence was inquiring for it.

"Of course I won't wear them," said Phœbe, taking out

one garment after another and holding it up for the pleasure of Mary and Ellen and Harvey and Philip, John smiling in happy entertainment on the whole group. "Mother is used to buying clothes this time of year and she just can't keep off Washington Street."

"Of course you will wear them," said Ellen indignantly. "The women who have been here for a year without seeing new clothes have a right to look at them. And any border ruffian who comes along should see them for the good of his soul. You'll wear them all to church one after another." The village already in its second year had four churches organized, though none as yet had a building for service.

"You couldn't add much to the variety there," said Mary. "I am awed at the grandeur of some and almost embarrassed at the queerness or poorness of others."

"You needn't be," retorted Ellen, promptly deserting the cause of clothes for that of humanity. "Those women are not in the least embarrassed themselves."

Released from the thought of returning, Phœbe turned to the life before her with deeper absorption than ever before. This vivid waiting on event, this sharp interest in the individual life, this panorama of bare feeling and purpose, daily gave her richer impression and emotion. And then there was spring on the prairie. "I never saw spring as a whole before!" she cried. The whole country offered the season all at once, in one grand total of green deepening quickly day by day. When she rose in the morning she felt a hurry as if she had something to overtake, and she hastened to match the flower-sprinkled green of today to that of yesterday as she looked upon it. The spring gave Ellen ecstasy; it made Phœbe deeply solemn.

John Truman's deep imagination was touched also by the turn of the year. One could wonder whether he was not more a farmer than a citizen and as much a poet as either, when the returning newness of the year gave the country again its broad fabric of green. Anyone might see that the serenity of this sweet moment was superseding all the ugly threat and malevolence of the past months. That high-minded and unmolested meeting in Topeka had also

given him great rest of spirit. Here was at last a solid organization of purpose and a nucleus all men might recognize, among the inchoate conditions of the place. The richness and poetry of feeling that had belonged with last year's spring returned to him. And Ellen's spirit rested joyously beside his.

But Ellen herself knew no fluctuation in her view of events. The danger she had against her will been forced to recognize, was only moved into the background. Yet she laughed as she opened her doors and windows to spring, and laughed again as she saw Phœbe preparing seed-potatoes for Amos.

XIX

BUT of Sheriff Jones' spring symphony the motif was "arrest." Wrath against Lawrence, unpunished Lawrence, still rived his soul. He could not keep away from the place, though he came fruitlessly again and again and its smiling citizens blandly inquired after his health and fortunes and he rode furious away. Had he come with a warrant for any one man or men, they were tacitly pledged not to resist him. But he made no such frank issue. Arrest was a challenge with which he sought to taunt and rouse them. But for his ferocity and truculence he would have seemed much like an ill-tempered child giving a dare.

"And yet all the world is coming to Kansas," said Judge Sayle, standing slim and brushed and erect in a group of men on the street and looking, in spite of his cordial interest, quite apart from them. Three immigrant wagons had just come into town and were disemboguing in front of the Cincinnati House.

"They don't know what is before them," said one gloomy man who had not ventured to bring his family to join him.

"They evidently do," answered Miller. A brace of guns had just been taken from one of the wagons and a twelve-year-old boy stood holding two slim-necked powder-flasks. "Out of the mouths of babes and sucklings," Miller added.

"And the arrivals seem to be chiefly of your sort," continued Sayle.

"Time is fighting best for us," answered Hugh Fraser. He had paused with them, in a hurried trip to town in search of some freight. Rosy sonsy Jessie Fraser had at last arrived, and Hugh wore a look now of happiness and yet of added seriousness that drew at the hearts of his friends.

"That they are mostly on our side is only a practical thing," said another man. "It doesn't mean that the pro-

portion of abolitionists is growing at such a rate, outside the territory. But it is plain enough to everybody that this is no place to bring negroes and that their work wouldn't be very profitable here. So that practically bars slave-owners. We can't take so much comfort as we should like to from the facts."

"I see some negroes working around here."

"Yes, a few. And they are chiefly owned across the line and hired out over here." This was said with some bitterness. "It is partly a jibe."

"Are they safe?" asked the lawyer curiously. His questioning regarding the place was endless.

No one answered for a moment. A certain look passed over the faces of a few of the men. It was Done Riley who spoke up, "Safer for the niggers than for the owners."

"The southerners are coming through," said Gene Lyford after a pause. "You'll see before grass is ripe. Buford is raking Alabama and South Carolina now for companies."

"They won't bring their wives and niggers though," said Riley. "They're bully buccaneers."

"All the doggoned meaner," said the gloomy man. "I'd rather fight a man that has something to lose."

"They're just to be turned loose for catch as catch can," said Lyford. "Buford is promising them a happy hunting-ground."

"But meantime you are filling up with bona fide settlers," Sayle went on.

"Yes," answered Miller. "Time is certainly fighting for us."

John Truman was not often in village talk nowadays for he was closely busied at his place or among his neighbors. He did not after all ride over to Osawotamie, though he heard many things of the strange old man over there and his patriarchally governed family. That man thought he knew how this hard and intricate knot was to be cut, and he urged the cutting. But John in his serener mood now felt that after all such cutting was not wise and need not be a part of the history of the state. Men like Robinson and Wood and Walker and Abbott had wisdom to be relied on.

So John bought in some other men's claims and had more sod cut—to Ellen's mingled regret and satisfaction—and Matthew and Owen took off their shoes and ran along on the cool smooth folds behind the plow or darted ahead of the oxen to pluck a little grass flower or red sweet william or yellow puccoon away from destruction. And more seed came in from the East for their Kansas soil and stock was driven in for Kansas pasture and it began to seem that the family fortunes had taken root in Kansas earth. When to John's beloved farming he could add also the elements of experiment and creation, he was happy indeed. Besides this, there were demands on his kindliness equalled only by his readiness to meet them. He was always dividing precious seed with a needy neighbor or lending a cow to help the hunger of sickly children or managing to spare an ox or even perhaps a horse for some ill-provisioned new settler or giving advice or more substantial help to some Free State family with more enthusiasm than efficiency. "Thank God, we're not poor," he said to Ellen more than once. And Ellen in her heart thanked God for the richness she knew in John himself.

Thus was his mind and his occupation when the end of April approached. Then one day he rode into the village with Ellen beside him and while he waited for her to finish her sociable errands he stood about the street in talk with Fraser and others.

Sheriff Jones and four or five other men rode slowly into the street from the direction of Lecompton and dismounted and looked about them, the others attendant on the movement of Jones. Lewis Hardie had said once, "Jones is so much like a stage villain that you can hardly believe he is true. He scowls where he should and stamps where he should and swears mightily where he should. He is such an indubitable villain that it hardly seems possible for real life to afford him."

Now, stalking his way down the street, he stopped before the group in which John was and said fiercely, "I want you to act as a posse to help me arrest Sam Wood."

"Where is Wood?" asked one of the men.

"I don't know but I've a warrant for him."

"Well," drawled Done Riley, "if you find him and you five can't arrest him send for us and we'll come and help you."

Jones scowled and began a blustering "Damn it—" when his eye fell on one of the Branson rescuers who had returned to the vicinity of Lawrence and now was standing quietly in the group. He had not seen Jones in time to make his escape.

"I arrest you!" cried Jones, laying hold of the man with both hands and a sudden rough vigor that seemed almost vicious. The man, taken by surprise with the onslaught, forgot all resolve of non-resistance and raising his arm as if in defense struck Jones across the face.

The posse closed up around Jones and many hands moved to pistols involuntarily. There was a moment when each side waited.

Then Jones shouted angrily, "You're resisting the law. I'll arrest you yet. I'll arrest you all for contempt of court. You should have assisted me. I'll get you, Truman, and you!" He indicated several.

John had not known that Jones even knew his name, though they had been face to face before. The whole posse moved to their horses and rode away. A moment of trepidation fell on the street. The man who had struck the blow looked apologetic.

"I shouldn't have done that," he said.

"He took you by surprise," Fraser excused him. "A sheriff doesn't usually arrest a man by knocking him down before he mentions his warrant."

The first perturbation over, the men grinned at each other and looked after the departing officer of the law.

"If you could drive five men off by throwing up your arm, what could you do if you would take a gun and give your whole mind to the business?"

"Why don't three or four of us go out and wallop all Missouri?"

They made light of it. John did not even tell Ellen as they rode home that he had been threatened individually.

But a few days later Jones, having notified the Federal Marshal, a pro-slavery coadjutor, that a mob had taken a

prisoner out of his hands in Lawrence, returned to the town with an officer and ten regular soldiers. Lawrence determinedly held its hand and without opposition he took six men prisoners. He asked for others who were not immediately to be found, but prosecuted no search for them. John was on his way to town that afternoon but Harvey, watching for him on the hilltop, warned him that Jones had come and was asking for him. John sat still on his horse a few minutes thoughtful, and then thoughtfully turned and rode back home. Harvey with him.

In the evening they were sitting about the door in the early moonlight, the Lairds and Livingstones with them, Harvey wondering whether to stay all night or take himself back to the disturbed village.

"I'm not conspicuous enough as a statesman or renowned enough as a warrior to attract the doughty Jones' attention," he was saying. "The only thing is, of course, that it isn't safe for any Free State man to own as good a horse as Widmer."

They all shouted with laughter at this. Widmer was the one subject on which Harvey always spoke seriously.

"In fact," said Martin Laird, "Widmer alone would be sufficient *casus belli.*"

"Well—" began Harvey.

Three horsemen turned the curve of the hill and came toward them. They all waited tensely. No one knew in these days what any approach of strangers might mean.

But it was Henry Watson who spoke up even before the horses stopped, and they saw Roger Stivers and Hugh Fraser beside him.

"Is Truman here?"

John rose. "What's the news?"

There was a moment's pause before they answered. "Jones is shot."

The startlement of the group was sharp and intense. As if the silence said all, Watson went on, "He got his six prisoners and put them under guard of his posse. Then he was sitting in his tent with a light and somebody shot him from the outside by his shadow."

It was Mary Livingstone, the newest to the place, who

questioned the shocked silence of the others. "I don't see why you are so horrified. You wouldn't have killed him yourselves, but didn't he fully deserve it and wasn't he trying to do much worse to other men?"

"He deserved worse than mere shooting, if he were to go by deserts. That's far too gentlemanly and pleasant a death for him," said Fraser. "But none of our men was to do it," he added in matter-of-fact way.

"Who did it?" asked Ellen. Each one had been silently framing the question.

"No one knows or suspects. The shot came out of the shadow somewhere. We can't think of any one to do it."

"Probably one of his own border ruffians who had a grudge against him," said Mrs. Laird. "He has trained them to this kind of work himself." This sort of bitterness was rare on Mrs. Laird's quiet tongue.

"That's not impossible!" cried Harvey.

"Not impossible," said Martin Laird. "Yet we are not to believe that there may not be men on our side who are capable of assassinating, either as a method of warfare or for the satisfaction of private grudge. There never was a war of any degree, especially such irregular warfare as this, that did not annex evil men on each side and give chance for evil deeds and passions." Laird always spoke with the slight formality his clerical training had given him.

"That is true," said Fraser. "The best of us can't answer for the worst of us."

"Is he dead?" asked John quietly. He had not spoken before. They all laughed a little that such an important question should have been left so long unasked.

"No," answered Watson. "He was shot near the spine. They have taken him to the Free State Hotel and are tending him there. Fortunately his good friend Doctor Stringfellow was in town with him and is taking chief care of him."

Stivers chuckled. "Think of Stringfellow listening to Jones' last words in the Free State Hotel!"

"It may not come to that. No doubt they are making the most of it. They have sent back word to Missouri al-

ready that he is dying. Even if he gets better it will take a good while to catch up with that. They didn't waste any time in getting the news into circulation."

"Jones asked for you today, Truman," said Stivers. "He was sorry to miss you. If he don't recover you'll be glad to know that he thought of you in his last hours."

Stivers' lightness did not suit the mood of the others.

"They will be sorry to lose their ringmaster Jones," said Fraser thoughtfully, "but otherwise nothing could suit Atchison and Stringfellow better. And in fact even if Jones gets better the harm will be done just the same."

"He can lead the punitive force himself in that case," suggested Laird.

"No mere punishment will ever set this right," said John sadly.

In the morning John rode into the village—a village now growing so rapidly that western phrasing already called it a town.

Ellen looked a hesitant protest at his going but John urged, "I must see if anything is to be done about this," and she said nothing more.

Lawrence was all one stir. It seemed to John as he rode in that nobody could be indoors. Stivers met him at the first crossing of ways.

"I have only to look for you to see where something is going on," John told him.

"Something is going on at the hall this time," replied Stivers. "There's a public meeting." He turned to walk alongside Truman's horse, but with a sharper eye to right and left than John's. There was as much of an air of excitement on the street as in the days of the Wakarusa war, but a seriousness much greater, John thought as he watched the faces of the talking groups. He entered the hall with Stivers.

"There is one thing about this place," said Stivers with his usual easy flow of words. "We are sometimes short of food or ammunition but never of speeches. Whatever is to be the fate of Kansas it will be inaugurated in oratory." But John did not take up his theme.

And there was no mere exercise of speech-making this morning. Stern men spoke of this "isolated act." Bewildered men wondered briefly at the atrocity.

Mose Litener came into the room with his heavy slumping walk and listened a moment. Then he rose. He seemed to have been drinking a little. "What are you folks making this darned fuss about?" he demanded roughly. "You know you're glad it's done and if he dies too you'll be a sight gladder. Maybe you think you're too particular to do it yourselves but what are you going back on the poor cuss that did it for? You know you're glad of it. That's the way to treat 'em."

A gap of indignant silence followed his voice. Might it be that the murderer sat among them now, secure of their sympathy in spite of their words?

John Truman rose in the front of the room and faced around to Litener. He seemed to tower above even his usual height, his face was white under the prairie tan and his blue eyes seemed themselves like keen weapons, condemning and threatening. He controlled his voice, but it seemed to be striking sharp blows in the tensely still room.

"A man who says that can't be a man who knows what an insult he is offering, not only to us but to our cause. It is calling us individually murderers and liars, sneaking murderers in the dark! The Free State cause is not to be fought by crime and skulking outrage. The man that fired that shot may have been for us but he was not one of us. We are here to fight for the rights of men. It would be a strange thing if we fought by crime and outrage. As Free State men we repudiate this deed, from its weak conception to its black execution!"

Stern faces looked acquiescence to his words. The meeting ended and men and women went as quietly as possible about their usual business. But no man came forward to say he had fired the shot, nor was it to be known until long after border warfare had ended. An obscure man, a misguided adherent of the cause but a man of no quality among them, had brought the disgrace upon them.

"You stay here a moment," said Stivers as the crowd

began to leave the hall. And he went away to reconnoiter, keeping up his guardianship of John.

He came back in only a few minutes. "I went to see if anybody was hanging around that thought he could arrest you. Jones put Salters in charge and he's been running around this morning trying to get somebody. He would like to bring in some sheaves too. He asked for you this morning. Jones is so much better that they are going to take him to Franklin this afternoon. He's putting up a good deal of a bluff. He makes too much noise for a sick man. They've done their best to get the Congressional committee to move back to Lecompton. Whitfield was with them and he howled murder and ran away like a chicken with its head off. Of course it would be a great thing to get the committee to move, on the ground that it isn't safe here. But I think you'd better go home for today until Salters is less general."

"Salters is a pink-livered cuss," said a man who had come up beside them. "And that kind's more dangerous than a real brave man. That's the trouble with a skunk like Jones. He wants to fight without being in a fight. If you didn't shoot him through a tent you'd never get a chance to shoot him because he'd throw up his hands. He always hopes that if he stirs things up enough somebody else'll start the fight and he can stand out and sick 'em on."

No soldiers were on the street and John rode out of town unimpeded. He tasted his own mood as he rode. Below the deep indignation of this last hour was a calmness he could not have expected of himself when threatened with causeless arrest. But in these hands arrest sank from injustice to mere wanton offense. And just now outrageous performance on the part of border ruffians seemed inconsiderable in proportion to crime in his own ranks. For himself, even in the face of arrest he felt less desire for retaliation than he had on some of the earlier days.

XX

THE days that followed were wild ones. Salters stayed about with his posse for a time and daily pursued his duty of attempting arrests among a dodging and vanishing population. Perhaps the soldiers, indignant at being put to such use, pursued the search but near-sightedly. They were free to express their distaste for such service, and time after time a man slipped from under their hands. The distraught Salters, running to and fro and eager to show himself worthy of the mantel fallen upon him, was fain at last to bring such pro-slavery friends as he could find in the neighborhood, to his help.

Even then success evaded him and Lawrence thus added to the score already against her. One indignant wife greeted would-be constables at her door with a dash of hot water, and others with words as warm. Salters went about with a bodyguard of soldiers, who were not above exchanging winks with citizens behind his back, or even dictating to him the limits of their duties.

"I'm sorry Hardie is missing this," said Harvey Sayre, dodging out frequently to observe. Harvey was very busy. Editors of two of the papers were among those sought and absenting themselves, and Harvey was making himself very useful in their little printing-offices.

John was staying at home these days, with a saddled horse at hand wherever he worked. He couldn't think himself in great danger and yet he did not wish to have his spring work interrupted by any farce of arrest. Nor could anyone yet tell what might follow arrest. Amos was still about the place, helping in a general way with whatever there was to do. Ellen said not much of anxiety, but there was little time when she did not look eastward from door or window along the way toward Lawrence. Harvey or Stivers or someone else was to bring John word if possi-

ble should men take a suspicious turn in this direction. But it might very well be that they could not manage to bring warning.

So Ellen watched.

But she was quietly running candles one afternoon, John having gone away to the west on an errand, when an unheralded loud knock came at the door. She paused a moment to collect herself and to lay her pistol near at hand, when the knock was repeated violently.

Ellen opened the door. Two men stood there, their horses tied to a post beyond them. One was a stranger to her, the other she knew to be Art Carpenter, a somewhat active pro-slavery adherent. She had once last year spent a day helping his wife to care for a sick child.

"Where's John Truman?" demanded Carpenter harshly.

Ellen controlled her first terrified feeling and looked at them pleasantly. "Won't you take off your hats?" she said sweetly with an air of hospitality, in the same tone with which she would have invited them in and offered them chairs.

The men stared at her, brought to a startling check. Then each in a surprised way put up a hand and removed a dingy hat. Ellen continued to look pleasant and expectant of further politeness and Phœbe coming to her side viewed them with disconcerting agreeable curiosity.

"Is Mr. Truman at home?" asked Carpenter again.

"No, he is away—I'm sorry. Is there anything I can do for you?"

"No, I guess not." Carpenter had lost his cue. Unfortunately he also remembered Ellen, now that he was face to face with her. He looked uncertainly about the place. Ellen's heart was beating violently but with determination she kept her social attitude.

"How is your baby, Mr. Carpenter?" she asked. "She was so very sick last summer." But she made a movement as if dismissing them, showing a tentative readiness to close the door as soon as she politely could.

"See here," broke in the other man, "we've got to find him. How do we know whether he's here or not?"

Ellen's expression grew surprised and stern. She turned

inquiringly on Carpenter as if asking him to apologize for his boorish companion.

"My husband is not here," she said with dignity. "Nor anywhere near here," she added.

"Well, tell him to stay where he is if he don't want to be took," said Carpenter awkwardly. "We want to arrest him."

Both men had held their hats clumsily during the interview, but as if not knowing what else to do with them. They now as clumsily put them on and turned away. Ellen breathed a deep breath of relief. Then the strange man suddenly turned back.

"I got to have more'n your word for it," he said. "How do I know he ain't in the house?"

"Will you come in and look, Mr. Carpenter?" said Ellen coldly. "This man can stay outside. Phœbe, will you watch him from the window?"

She led Carpenter inside.

"I'd like to take your word for it," he began clumsily.

Ellen interrupted him. "Come upstairs," she said. She threw open the door of each little room, and showed him the loft space over the kitchen ceiling. "You'll want to look under the beds," she said. Carpenter obediently stooped. "They used to stab through the beds with their bayonets when they went out on a hunt like this," she remarked.

"I'm kind of ashamed of this, Mis' Truman," Carpenter began again. "Truman ain't never done me no harm."

"Yes, I should think you would be," said Ellen calmly. "But of course some men prefer a job like this."

Carpenter, ever more embarrassed, went quickly through the house, Ellen allowing no place to escape him. The other man in the meantime searched the stables, Phœbe keeping him distantly in view. Then the two mounted and rode away, Carpenter with a final, "I hope you'll excuse us, Mis' Truman."

John slept in the barn-loft at the Seltons that night. But the next day they carried blankets out to a place where underbrush grew thick in a little hollow, and he lay there that day and night. Ellen hourly expected another

search of the place. But no one came and the next day Harvey rode out to say that Salters had taken his prisoners and gone to Lecompton.

Lawrence breathed more freely for a moment, and men scattered in distant places or hidden in woods or gullies returned home. John busied himself freely about the place. There were plenty of workmen for it now and he hurried on their labors. There must be a crop this year, for the sake of the country as well as himself. The Trumans, with means still in reserve, had not suffered anxiety from this experimental year past, though it had brought no pecuniary profit to them. Others had hazarded everything, their future as well as their present, and suffered in forecast as well as in daily need. Ellen reminded herself of that as she constantly offered them an assisting hand. But the Trumans also, if they were to stay here, must lay the foundations for future prosperity and especially must make a home of this land. So John planned busy days for himself and the men who helped him. For several days now they did not go down into the village at all. They had hardly known such isolation even in the stormy days of winter. Selton on one side and Laird on the other were equally busy.

"It seems almost like a bucolic life," said Ellen.

John laughed at her. "You are getting spoiled for plain living. You want a continual army down on the Wakarusa and daily constables at your door."

Then came news, breaking into the momentary pastoral. Fraser and Stivers came galloping up one evening to say that John was wanted for a meeting of the committee of safety the next day. A stranger—there could always be a stranger since they came on so rapidly to view the country, undeterred by reports of danger—was with them, introduced by Fraser as a friend from Canada.

"What is the meeting for?" asked John.

"For everything," said Fraser. "They want to decide what to do about the findings of the grand jury. You see, Mackay," he explained to his friend, "we have a complicated system, or no system. The territorial judiciary has a right to take a hand in our affairs. Judge Lecompte,

the chief justice, is sitting at Topeka now. The grand jury of the county has just reported to him. All these are pro-slavery. The whole mess," he said to John, "is as bad as can be. Lecompte instructed the jury that any resistance to the laws of the bogus legislature, whether actual or only planned, is high treason. The perpetrators are liable to arrest. That means all of us because it is with them to decide what we are thinking or planning in our hearts about those laws. This bogus constitution, MacKay, was framed by the legislature elected at the bogus election last spring. The Congressional Committee appointed to investigate the validity of that election is meeting in Lawrence right now, but at the same time the President without waiting to see what they will report has declared the legislature to be authoritative and now the judge says to speak against their laws is high treason. According to their constitution—of course that hasn't yet been accepted by Congress—it is a crime even to disapprove of slavery verbally."

"Is the judge by chance a lawyer?" asked MacKay.

"No, merely a judge, I guess," said Stivers. "Frank Pierce appointed him—loves him."

"Everything that comes from Washington is *a priori* pro-slavery," said Fraser bitterly.

"Until after it comes," suggested Ellen smiling.

"Yes, they do sometimes make a mistake and get a better man than they think," Stivers scoffed. "I think I see signs of improvement even in our friend Shannon."

"I can see how people rebel sometimes against even a representative government," Fraser went on with continued bitterness.

"And yet your forbears endured a monarchy and fought for all the Charlies," said his friend.

"And what else?" asked John, turning them back to the point.

"Well, writs of arrest naturally follow."

"That will be no novelty. They have been turning them out with great facility all spring. Do they think they can outdo Jones at that?"

"These will be different from the Jones kind. They will go to United States Marshal Donaldson. He's no better

than Jones in political conscience and a border ruffian in soul, wherever he came from. But he can't be treated like Jones. You'll be glad to know that Jones is up and about again after his recent indisposition."

"The grand jury will strike higher than Jones did," said Stivers. "Lecompte is of larger mould. They will want Reeder and Robinson as well as Wood and the others. They will probably compliment you again, Truman."

"It's a plot."

"Oh, yes. And smart."

"Robinson left for Washington last night. He was going soon and thought he might be interfered with if he waited. So he and Mrs. Robinson slipped off to Westport last night. He wants to get the statement of the case before as many public men as he can. Reeder is still taking evidence for the Congressional Committee and says he will not move until he is through, arrest or no arrest. Anybody heard from Hardie?" he asked looking around. "He was to convince as many congressmen as he could get a chance at."

No one had heard, apparently, and Stivers went on, "The committee of safety meets without Robinson in the morning and they want you, Truman." He gave John an added look which made John follow him out to his horse, while Fraser and the Canadian exchanged lighter courteous talk with Ellen and Phœbe.

"The very dickens is loose everywhere," said Stivers, dropping his voice a little. "It's no use to tell women though. This life is too hard for them anyway. But there's something going on all around. Three or four men have been shot in the last ten days. Some of the news comes in slowly. They seem to be potting whatever they can get. Any one of the devils feels free to shoot. Jake Wilson was the last." John gave an exclamation. "News came in just as we left. He's still living but unconscious. He was shot and then beaten by two men—that is all they know. He helped to drive off a claim-jumper down by Bloomington awhile ago, and this happened. That gang from South Carolina we've been hearing about has begun to come in. Buford is grub-staking

them. They say they have come for claims, but they're no more farmers than wharf-rats are. They are to help Jones when he wants them. Things look bad."

John stood silent and Stivers in a moment put a hand on his shoulder. "John," he said with an unwonted seriousness for which he offered no reason, "take care of yourself. You are the kind of man we've got to keep here. Some men are as useful for martyrs as for anything else. But we want you living, and not living in jail either."

"I'm only one," said John.

"You are a dozen when it comes to value. And we need all twelve."

The other men joined him and they all rode away.

XXI

JOHN came back in apparently even temper from the meeting of the committee of safety the next day, but in a seriousness he could not conceal.

"I wish I could send you away for a while, Ellen," he said as she served him a late dinner.

"Well, you can't," replied Ellen cheerfully. "What is the news?"

"Nothing new this morning. You heard what Fraser said last night. The grand jury have reported a recommendation that the two papers, the *Free State* and the *Herald of Freedom* be suppressed—"

"Have they any right to do that?—Is it their business?"

"Not in the least. But for them a grand jury is what they want it to be. I suppose the most of them haven't any notion of law. I've heard that some of them can't read. Salters is barely able to read and write. His written orders would make Matthew laugh. Then they further announce that the Free State Hotel is built for military purposes and must be removed. They talk about it as if it were a fort."

"The beautiful new hotel! Harvey says they are going to finish putting in the furniture this week if they can get it through Westport. They say it is better than any hotel between here and St. Louis."

"Better than any I stayed in in St. Louis."

"Well," said Ellen in a tone of relief, "it will be hard for them to remove a three-story stone building."

John didn't answer but drank his coffee—scorched grain coffee.

"I wonder when we can bring the other dishes and things out here," he said looking critically at his too-substantial cup, obtained especially for pioneer life.

Ellen laughed leaning forward as she sat beside him,

to put her forehead against his arm. John looked down at her brown hair in sad embarrassment and bent around to kiss her cheek.

"Where is I O U?" he asked, that being Hardie's name for sturdy little Owen.

"They have organized a whole Massachusetts farm out there," said Ellen lifting her head with a laugh, "with little crooked New England fences of stones from the draw marking off the baby fields. Owen is Friday, naturally, and he has been trudging back and forth all the morning carrying up the stones in his little round fists. They have improvements you have never heard of. One field is devoted to pancakes. And—bless their hearts—they have a grove of pathetic little twigs set out and they are maple sugar trees."

"Poor little exiles!" said John.

"They have a box with a terrible monster in it, a pretty tiny green snake. And what do you think they call it?—Jones."

John looked troubled. "Do you think all this is hurting them?"

"No," said Ellen sturdily. "They think it is all a natural state for us elderly ones. Their life and their farm are so much more important to them than anything they know about what we are doing."

John's face was tender as he looked out to where the bobbing fair heads showed above the window-sill. "They'll soon be as bleached-pated as the little Seltons," he said.

"They will not either," returned Ellen indignantly. She rested her forehead comfortably against his arm again.

John dropped a side look upon her bent head. "There will probably be another committee meeting tomorrow night," he said hesitantly. Then before he could go further hasty steps came to the open door and Ellen rose abruptly to her feet. Tom Selton brought an excited face before them.

"Sam Thompson is shot!" he stuttered. "And another man!"

"Thompson!—Where?"

"Out about two mile on the California road."

"What for?" asked Ellen.

"Thompson 'd been testifying before the Congressional committee about the election at Bloomington last year. They met him an' just called him a damned abolitionist an' shot him down an' took his hoss. Some fellows seen it an' rode along after to get the hoss away an' they just turned round and shot one and rode off agin on the run." Selton spluttered incoherently as he talked. "Joe Harris just come along an' told me."

"Don't tell Mrs. Selton," Ellen cautioned him, recommending for Mrs. Selton the reticence she scorned for herself.

Selton stared and said, "No, I reckon. Gosh, it makes me want to fight. Them skunks! Do you think we'll have to fight em?"

"Nobody can tell. We'll try to make it unnecessary."

"Gosh, I got to get my crops in. Them skunks ain't got any crops nor anythin' but just to ride round killin' and stealin'. Sometimes I think I'll just take my wife back to her folks an' then just turn in an' kill."

He looked such a combination of pathetic impuissance and fury that Ellen was inclined to turn her eyes away. But she said again, "Don't tell Mrs. Selton until you have to."

John rose a little wearily and went off with Selton, saying that he might have to go back to town. Ellen sat still beside John's place. She put her elbows on the table and let herself sink deep in thought.

But the boys came running in with demands and presently Mrs. Laird came walking up the hill to ask advice on the planting of late vegetables—Ellen culled local information wherever she went and was becoming a repository of the science of the country—and to sit awhile over her sewing, as if domestic life were still important. She talked quietly and calmly in her soft southern voice and they spoke even of this latest murder without a sign for fear between them, though intensest feeling.

"Just the same," Hardie had said once when someone expressing admiration of Mrs. Laird had implied also dis-

approval of her antecedents, "it takes several generations of slave-holding to make women like that."

"And women that are then willing to give up their slaves," added Ellen.

"Yes, perhaps," Hardie agreed.

But today as she folded her sewing and took Ellen's gift of young cabbage plants—a bit of homeliness that seemed to belong to another life—she turned suddenly and kissed Ellen. And Ellen felt sympathy both asked and given in the kiss. She realized more fully than she had ever done before how sharp for her neighbor must be the loneliness of the hours when Martin Laird was away from home, and how quiet that house must be at all times.

For Ellen herself the hours were so full of duties and people that she sometimes longed for aloneness and rest. She wished for a little today as she turned rapid hands to a succession of tasks and gave her mind to one member of her household after another. She wanted to realize fully for herself this new organization of danger and to think of plans for action. But after all, she suddenly told herself, there were just two things that could be done —either to go away or to stay here. They would stay, of course. And staying, there was nothing to do but to follow along the straight path of usefulness to the settlement and adherence to the right of freedom for every man.

The next day she sent an imperative message to Harvey to come out to the farm. She intended to keep him there by some means. The center of these complications and dangers was no place for an off-hand young spirit like Harvey's. She thought of a dozen things no one but he could do on the farm.

Harvey came, obliging and kindly, but dropping from his usual nonsense to serious speech. He had always before found more excitement than seriousness in the prospect of fighting.

"Governor Robinson is arrested!" was his announcement.

"I thought he had gone!" cried Ellen.

"He had. They took him off the boat at Lexington in

Missouri. They let Mrs. Robinson go and she went on to Washington in his place."

"Had they any warrant over there?" asked John.

"No. The warrant wasn't out yet. They didn't bother to wait for it. They are holding him in Missouri. They will bring him to Lecompton or take him to Leavenworth."

"To Leavenworth!" Nothing worse could happen to a Lawrence man.

"I think we should go over and rescue him," said Harvey fiercely. "They'd just as soon hang him or hack him to death. Think what they've done already at Leavenworth! Mere shooting is too decent for those beasts to do!" Harvey choked up in his vehemence. The steady serious soldier had won his young adherence.

"So do I," said Philip Livingstone, who had just entered with Mary. "It's time we began to hit back. We're standing too much."

"I don't think he would want it," said John with quiet restraint. He had been moving restlessly about the room, looking out sometimes into the gathering darkness but withholding himself from the conversation.

Riders came up along the road near, three apparently, undistinguishable in outline. A shot was heard and the tearing of a board at the corner of the kitchen, and then the louder sound of horses, galloping off into the dusk.

"No harm done," said John with the same quiet restraint, speaking from his place by the window. The men all hurried out to see what had been done. Phœbe moved up near to Mary and said some commonplace thing. The men came back promptly. It had been only a wanton piece of bullying.

"Like idiot boys throwing snowballs and running," said Harvey in mature disgust. "Aren't they the fools!"

Philip, his hand on Mary's shoulder, made reference to some such boyish escapade. But he changed his tone at the end when he turned to Mary and said, "I think you'd better stay here tonight, dear, if Mrs. Truman will keep you."

"Of course," answered Ellen in hospitable matter-of-fact way.

"Oh no—," Mary was beginning when a loud knock at the door brought them all silent. Before anyone moved however, a voice outside called, "Hello—it's Dick Milton," and John opened the door.

Milton was a rough uncouth farmer two or three miles farther on along the California road, a brusque uncivil man of many private quarrels as well as a general pugnacity on the slavery question.

He stumbled in in furious excitement. "They nearly got me!" he exclaimed and added an oath. "They shot at me twice. They nearly got me, damn them!"

He poured out a string of oaths, leaning against the door, his hat still on his head, his eyes rolling fiercely. He had had all the moral effect of being shot.

"Where?" interrupted John.

"Just over the hill, half a quarter down the road. I come straight out of town. I hadn't ought to stayed so long, and I seed Barlow and another fellow that lives out beyond me a-watchin' me. I reckon they come out just ahead o' me. Look here!" A bullet had unmistakably gone through the sleeve of his coat. They drew near to look at it with shocked exclamations, as if the tear itself were a horrible tragedy. Milton, a little quieted, looked at it himself with another intense "Damn them!"

"There are women here," said Philip with the sharpness of youthful reproof.

Milton took in the rebuke slowly. "I reckon if they kin stand what's a-goin' on they kin stand a little swearin' too," he said as the point reached him.

Indeed the chivalrous convention did seem a small thing beside the profound interest that concerned them all. But Livingstone put his arm around Mary as they stood listening. Milton observed them grimly. "Mebby the women'll hev to learn to swear a little for themselves before this is over," he said roughly. "Kin I stay all night?" and looked scornful as John's inquiring glance sought Ellen for an answer.

"Certainly," she said, "you must. I'm afraid we shall have to give you a shake-down though."

"I kin set up if I hav to, but I ain't goin' out on that road agin tonight."

Harvey went with him to put his horse away and John said cheerfully in his absence, "The man has a dozen private quarrels and rows. This probably comes out of one of them."

But Livingstone said again, "Mary, you will stay here tonight." And in the end they all stayed.

After the last shake-down had been spread and the miscellaneous household had gone to bed, Ellen heard John's step outside, up and down, back and forth, before the door. It was as if he must keep watch there. Far in the night when she wakened and found him still missing from her side she slipped to the window and in the faint starlight saw him sitting on the doorstep, his shoulders bowed and his head in his hands. Yet she knew that it was not mere danger or fear of the future that kept John Truman from his bed, awake and anguished, through the night.

A general assembly and conference was just beginning when John came into the village the next day. Sober-faced men were listening in groups while others who came in from outlying regions told their quota of news. From every quarter came some tale of theft or murder or burning, or brutal threat to wife and children left lonely in farmhouse. South Carolinians were scattered by twos and threes over the country, terrorizing wherever they went. They had no means of living in this country, generally, except robbery. Horses and cattle were disappearing, wagons were held up on the road, houses were robbed of food.

But after these tales the main issue came into discussion. Men had to learn the latest there was to know of the relation of Lawrence to the territorial government. These guerilla bands, already such a terror to the country, were to be used as the posse for Major Donaldson, the United States Marshal. He and Lecompte were not content with the arrests they had already made, with driving Reeder at last out of the country, and holding Robinson in Missouri, with the fact that arrest was no longer resisted in Lawrence.

It was obvious that they wanted more. An appeal to Governor Shannon as to the status of these marauding bands had brought back the official reply that there was no force about Lawrence "except the legally constituted posse of the United States Marshal and the Sheriff of Douglas County," and that the Governor "would in no way interfere with either of these officers in the discharge of their official duties." At the same time a proclamation was issued by Major Donaldson stating that the execution of his writs had been resisted in Lawrence by a large body of armed men and that now "the law-abiding citizens of the territory are commanded to be and appear in Lecompton as soon as practicable and in numbers sufficient for the execution of the law."

The Marshal's proclamation was not sent to Lawrence, the place apparently most concerned, but to Missouri and Leavenworth—for purposes too obvious. When it finally did reach Lawrence a letter signed by a committee of citizens was sent to the Marshal, inquiring into the reason for this and protesting that no resistance to the law had been made. To this the official had sent a jeering and intentionally offensive reply. His letter did not sound like the utterance of a federal officer but rather the wordy retort of a spleenful personal enemy of the place. An appeal had finally been made by Lawrence to Colonel Sumner, in charge of the Federal troops at Leavenworth, to come to their protection. But the colonel had been obliged to reply that he did not have the right to move his troops without authority higher than his own. He could not supersede territorial authority.

These were the conditions today, as the men of Lawrence came together. They looked each other in the eye and asked what they should do next. They had tried the legitimate resources. All the machinery of government, corruptly and illegally used, was against them and this mob might be at their doors any day. But it was still the machinery of government.

"I'm for fighting," said a tall lank old man rising. He had fought in Texas and in Mexico and his white hair surmounted a face browned by many suns on the

plains. "I've eaten more humble pie this year than in all the rest of my life. I've seen war before. We'll not gain anything by the reputation of being afraid of them. Let us organize and fight and do it quick."

A blustering man followed. "We can beat them easy if we once get together. We've seen that they're easy scared. There are more of us if we once all get together and we're miles better fighters. These Carolina whelps can steal cattle and scare women but they can't fight. This will never be settled until we show them we mean what we say."

Others followed, some nearly hysterical with excitement, some slow and solid, almost religious in their utterance. Many nodded earnest approval. They were weary of uncertainty and of subordination to a control and threat they despised.

John Truman had sat quiet, his head a little bowed. Many had looked at him, wondering if he was not to speak, to use the influence they recognized as great. Robinson was not there nor Wood nor Reeder nor Morrison. More than one watched John Truman's quiet head.

At last he rose. No one listening to his slow thoughtful words could have guessed the uncertainty there had been in his mind or the struggle against a strong man's natural impulses.

"We have been following a principle thus far," he said. "It has not kept us away from trouble. Many of you have suffered. But no one can tell how much worse our condition would be if we had not followed it, or how much greater the national misunderstanding of our position. We have gone on the policy of not resisting even the semblance of law. The pretext the pro-slavery officers are now using is that we have resisted. If we should prepare openly now for fighting, how much more plausible would their excuse be! Moreover the story would be told falsely or only half told, and we should lose sympathy in the view of the whole country. Kansas is not the only place where men are working for the cause of abolition and we must not interfere with the credit of the whole cause. We have to sacrifice our rights to keep up the appearance of right.

"Besides that, to gather men in off their farms now for days would be fatal to the whole section for a year. Many of you suffered enough last year. We must have crops. We can't afford—for the sake of immigration also —to lose crops this year.

"They are working now under the name of the national government. We know how little that means, but for our own sakes and for the sake of all the future here we must keep to the form of respecting the government." He stopped. "God knows," he said, "how hard it is not to fight!"

Perhaps his closing exclamation was more convincing than his argument had been. Men with fiery eyes, on the point of rising to refute him, sank back into place, and a moment of silence followed. Then Hugh Fraser's lean figure rose in the back of the room and his serious resonant Scotch voice added words to John's. Other men followed. Not all, by any means, were convinced, and heads shook in contradiction or sank in depression.

But some one moved that another committee be appointed to draft resolutions affirming the faithfulness of the place to law, and to prepare another letter to Lecompton asking assurance of protection. The meeting broke up slowly. There was a sort of comfort in gathering, even in futile gathering. In such suspense isolation was hard to bear. Many men shrank from going to their homes and telling their wives that assurance of protection was not yet in sight, that wakeful nights and anxious days, the straining ear and the fearful eye, were still to be theirs. Many other men, like brave Roger Stivers, thanked God as they went their ways, that neither wife nor child was theirs in this wild country. But many took John Truman's hand, convinced against their will or their interest but borrowing from his spirit to support their own.

John Truman rode home in a sort of serious exaltation, strange even to himself. It had been by no easy path that he had climbed to the ground of this utterance. All his firmly-rooted faith in law and order, the belief that fundamentally was John Truman, and all his reverence for his government, was outraged. But he had risen today to

an ideal of government higher even than loyalty demanded, far higher than he had put into his words. He must preserve it—his new state must preserve it—even if they all suffered individually. What did his own feelings matter? If his home suffered—Ellen, the boys?—ah, he put that thought away before it became fear and forced himself to trust the issue.

Late that night when Ellen had been still for a long time and he had been taking satisfaction in the fact and glorying in the self-control that allowed her—compelled her, perhaps—to sleep even amid her anxieties, he heard her laugh quietly to herself and raised himself quickly from his pillow.

"I was thinking," she said, "how little we think about the poor negroes nowadays."

John laughed a little too. "The negroes are a symbol," he said as he laid his head down again.

XXII

TUESDAY of the next week was golden and clear. The intervening days had been full of continued disquiet. Unsatisfactory negotiation with Lecompton had still gone on. The issue had been resolved into demand for more prisoners and for surrender of arms—the cannon and rifles held in Lawrence. But that point remained unsettled. The national government itself, Lawrence said, had not the right to demand private weapons.

In the meantime marauding parties of Carolinians continued to roam the territory, to rob houses, sometimes—under the authority of their own distant state!—to take prisoners, seeing no joke in that assumption of state authority. Many Free State men were held and abused under threat of death. More than one man, kept hungry and in discomfort for days, knew also the feel of a taunting rope about his neck. Yet though men were shot, no man was really hanged.

But this Tuesday was quiet. No cursing red-shirted men rode through the town or reconnoitered from the hill above. No parties stopped wagons on incoming roads or galloped past them with wild shots. No new threats came from Lecompton. All was as serene suddenly as if the land were at peace.

John Truman rode in to Lawrence and out again and found no cause for disturbance, unless lack of cause were itself one. Perhaps the policy of non-resistance was to be entirely successful. Disaffected men spoke against it still and some took their arms and went away for a season, unwilling to remain where active defense was not allowed. Yet today Lawrence breathed a tentative sigh of rest and went about her business. Urban interest centered for the moment in the Free State Hotel, formally opening now the doors which had been informally open for months. It was

to be a matter of village pride that guests and immigrants of any degree could now be made comfortable on their arrival.

"Judge Sayle is expecting his wife and her sister tonight," John reported to Ellen on his return. "It's lucky the hotel is just open. The judge is feeling a bit of trepidation over the way they will take the country. I think in his heart he wants to stay here now."

"He didn't think it so attractive when he came here," said Ellen with a laugh, "and he didn't think much of having women out here."

"He seems to have changed his mind on that point. Of course he couldn't decide without giving her a chance to see it. I think he is hoping it will take her as it has him. She must be something of a woman to come here at all. And he wants you to come tomorrow and meet them—wants us to come to dinner with them for this first dinner at the hotel."

"An invitation!" cried Ellen. "What ancient history!"

"I think he is feeling a little scared over getting them out here and wants you to help put the best face on things. It certainly isn't a very good time to bring new women out here."

"I don't know," said Ellen dubiously. "That would leave Phœbe—"

"Don't trouble about me," said Phœbe from the next room. "I don't mind staying here, with the boys and perhaps Amos."

"We'll have Harvey come out," said John. "You can't stay alone."

"Even at the worst these men don't hurt women," said Phœbe. "They have scared them sometimes purposely, but not often."

"They have mentioned southern chivalry so often," said Ellen, "they haven't left themselves any chance to torture women."

"I'll send Harvey out," said John shortly.

"John," said Ellen the next day as they drove off in the green and gold of a May morning, "how long it is since we just went off side by side like this! It makes me feel—"

She pressed his arm with both hands. "Let's just drive off and away. I don't want to go and be a social representative to strange ladies." She looked herself over whimsically. "I'm sure my hair is out of style. I haven't seen a *Godey's* for months. Isn't it strange to be going out on mere sociability again—in the midst of all this? Oh, John," she cried suddenly, "how much we have!"

John looked at her in astonishment, thinking of what had been in the days behind them and what might be in the days before them. "How much I have!" he said tenderly.

"Of course you mean me. But I have you and there's no long or short to that. Isn't it just sweet to talk such nonsense again? We are almost forgetting how."

"Ellen," said John soberly, "I've often been sorry I brought you out here—"

"Don't be," answered Ellen, a little impatiently.

"—but all the other times I am selfishly glad. I thought I loved you as much as could possibly be in the world before we came here. But it was so much less than what I have learned. I thought it had just settled down into something sweet and steady." His New England tongue stumbled over the phrases. "Your courage, Ellen—your greatness—I didn't know any woman, even you, could be so! I feel as if all that had been added to what I had before I came here."

"I'm only as brave as I have to be, alas," said Ellen. "It's simple to have your duties set down in front of you." But she pressed his arm again and said, "My own great man!"

John looked down at her glowing eyes and her soft bright color and bright hair waving under the curving brim of her despised hat. "You're prettier than ever, Ellen," he said.

"I call that from the sublime to the ridiculous—from my character to my face!"

In such talk, close and intimate and light, ignoring danger for once, and yet deep and unintimate, they came along the upland road and out on the hilltop above Lawrence and looked down on the little town beside the river.

"How it spreads!" cried Ellen. She had not seen it for some days and every week showed a difference. "It's almost a joke to think that a place can multiply itself in a year."

A year ago it had been an undefined collection of shag-houses, tents, log-houses, roof-houses with eaves resting on the ground, all set down apparently with little purpose of order. Now lines of streets showed clearly, frame houses appeared, the dooryard had arrived. In spite of the wild history of the year men were making homes there, not merely establishing a center for declaration of purpose. Lawrence, with all its dangers, was becoming a place of families. Toward the north of the settlement the Free State Hotel, stone-built and three-storied, rose solidly.

"In another year, in spite of everything, churches perhaps and town-hall and a school-building," said John.

"Look!" cried Ellen. She pointed toward where the Robinson home, a quarter of a mile away around the curve of the hill, looked down over the town.

Spread out on the open upland were men, hundreds of them, horsemen and footmen. They stretched out, a broad dark mass on the green, scattered in unmilitary disarray.

"They've come!" said John drawing rein in the road. He waited as if stricken. "I thought they wouldn't," he said slowly in a minute.

He sat looking at the swarming hilltop. Ellen slipped her arm through his and said nothing. Presently John mechanically drew on one line. "Shall we go back?" asked Ellen.

"No," said John dropping his hand again, "I ought to go on."

"If they are here they can't be out over the prairie too."

"I'll send Harvey out with you," he said. "But I must go down there." They talked in restrained voices, in strange matter-of-fact fashion.

"See there!" said Ellen. A knot of figures on the very brow of the hill had drawn apart and partially scat-

tered. In their center the outline of a cannon appeared, pointing toward the town.

"My God!" cried John, breaking his restraint. "Is it possible!

"Ellen," he said in a minute, "you take the horses and go back."

"Not yet," answered Ellen. "We'll go down and see first."

"I urged non-resistance. I must go down."

"Can it be true?" said Ellen in a low tone.

The voices of the men came to them, harsh and bellicose. A taunting shot sounded occasionally, announcing what was to follow. The men moved restlessly about, interweaving groups like excited cattle. The cannon pointed its warlike lips toward the town, promising the scale of the intended attack.

Below lay the little town, frailly built, falsely bound by loyalty to misapplied government, helpless by its own word.

"Where is our cannon?" asked Ellen.

"Hidden under a building."

John took the lines again and they went on silently. Quiet met them everywhere, silent doorways, empty streets. On the main street a few men moved here and there or halted in doors, waiting for they knew not what.

Stivers came out to meet them, moving slackly, carefully purposeless.

"You've come to our reception, Mrs. Truman," he said. "We're having a large party." Then as they remained soberly silent he went on. "They began to come in last night and paraded round in great feather. And when we got up this morning—pretty early, you may believe, like Sennacherib—there they were. Donaldson is in charge. Deputy Fain came down with a batch of the decentest of his men and got some of ours to act with them as a posse and has just arrested Dietzler and Smith. There they are still, over near the hotel. Everybody has been quiet. A lot of men left town last night saying they wouldn't come back till they could fight."

In the street in front of the hotel a group of men stood, mostly silent, all with an air of indecisive waiting. The

deputy himself, officious and surly, stood near his two prisoners, they rather more at ease than their captor. The group was the center of attention of the apparently onlooking town.

From the doorway of his hotel, where many loitered, Colonel Eldridge emerged and approached the group. He addressed the deputy and stood a moment in conference with him and then Fain turned to his men with an authoritative gesture and the whole party crossed the street and entered the hotel.

"Eldridge is asking them to dinner," said Stivers. "I hope his hospitality will do him some good. He went up to see Lecompte the other day to see if he could get a new ruling on the hotel. This is hard on him when he's done his best to give the country a decent hotel. Of course it's a Free State building, to be sure," he added.

"Are all these men going to be satisfied with just this?" asked Ellen.

Stivers looked grim. "Nobody knows."

"John," said Ellen with resolution, "I must either stay here to dinner or take those ladies out home with me. I can't go away from whatever they have to stand. It is a curious mixing of things," she added. It was certainly a strange time to give one's mind to social relations.

Stivers helped her to alight and John put the team away and they made their way to the hotel.

"I hope the ladies from New York won't think too scornfully of my last year's clothes," said Ellen with determined lightness as they mounted the steps.

"They are thinking more of manners than of dress just now," answered Stivers tersely.

The spacious lobby of the hotel was full of men but the place was quiet in a strange tense sort of way. Men talked, even laughed, but with an alertness for something else enveloping all their talk. John hurried Ellen through the place and past the curious eyes, and up to the parlors where Judge Sayle and his wife and sister-in-law sat restlessly waiting.

Mrs. Sayle was a slender woman of good carriage, rather modishly dressed, who came forward with an air of re-

pressing excitement, and pleasant cordiality for acquaintances in this new place. The sister, Miss Brewster, made no effort to repress excitement and plainly could not give her mind to even the form of cordiality.

"Isn't this terrible!" she gasped in greeting, as she allowed Ellen and John to take her trembling hand. She punctuated all the introductory talk of journey and climate and present accommodations—the convention with which they absurdly tried to clothe the dreadful circumstances of the moment—with a repetition of this exclamation or of "Charles, what can we do?"

At her fourth agonized asking her brother-in-law answered naturally, "Well, we can eat dinner just now. You never had such a remarkable dinner as you are going to have, Agnes." To his wife he said aside, "Did you leave everything packed up? We may have to get out in a hurry."

Mrs. Sayle nodded understandingly and turned with hostess gesture to Ellen and John. Ellen thought to herself, "She'll do," and then remembered with a smile how she herself had been looked over and appraised a year ago. This year she understood fully what those estimating looks had meant.

The long dining-room was full. Colonel Eldridge had a rarer occasion for his opening dinner than he could ever have planned. The deputy and his prisoners and as many of his posse as could find place sat at a large table at the end of the room and the others as near as possible. The table Judge Sayle had reserved was at the other side of the room. Ellen smiled to herself as she and the other women came in, forcing themselves to a public dining-room manner, rising to a social standard even for this occasion. Even Miss Brewster took on involuntarily an air of self-possession before the eyes of the room.

But such assumption gave way to curiosity as they looked about. The long room, already the place many times of scenes of importance to the settlement—of Barber's funeral service, of Free State conferences, of social meetings—had a dignity and degree of spaciousness that seemed to add to the scale of the scene before them. The groups of silent

watchful Lawrence men going through the form of eating, the uneasiness and bravado of the red-shirted "posse," the hang-dog look of Sheriff Jones, who had not passed even today without hearing scoffing impudent remarks from irrepressible Free State men—even Mrs. Sayle's eyes saw much of this. Ellen, in spite of recognizing the elements which should cause trepidation, found her interest rising to a sort of dramatic enjoyment. Her eyes sparkled a little as her quick glance went from point to point. She had never witnessed drama on such a scale as this, drama also which involved herself. Those two men who sat there calmly eating with all that cumbrous guard and those lowering officers, were not merely men unjustly arrested; they were a state question, a national question. Her mind flew back to the Federal government, her own reverenced government, in whose name this was done. She seemed to be seeing it through a mist, a dark mist with strange distorting currents in it—and she and hers far away and alone.

"Who is that black man at the end of the table?" asked Mrs. Sayle.

"Sh! Don't speak of black men out here," her sister warned her nervously.

John laughed. "He isn't so dark. It's his great black soul you see."

"He's the headsman," said Ellen. "He swings the official axe."

"He is called the sheriff of the county," Judge Sayle explained.

"I wouldn't trust *him* with the spoons," said Miss Brewster with sudden accession of spirit. "What did you make a man like that sheriff for?"

The simple querulousness of the question made them all laugh, including one or two men within hearing, and the sheriff and his aides sent annoyed distrustful glances in their direction.

But while hate and indignation and fear and high principle came together in that room, dinner and the forms of eating went on as if they were important; and while men's thoughts were on the menacing hordes outside they them-

selves made talk, of urban interest in the new hotel and its equipment and of the plowing and seeding of the new country.

Yet after all there was nothing but suspense for men's breath or food or drink that day. Each man looked at his neighbor with apparent calm, but his eye said, "What next?" The crowd in the hotel separated uneasily as if they could not readily detach themselves, having no guide to individual conduct.

"Let's go out and see the purlieus of the village," said Judge Sayle casually as they left the dining-room, and they emerged from the hotel into the afternoon street. There were more men in the street now, and women with care on their faces looked often from their doorways. Ellen chatted on as best she could, seeking sprightly or fundamental things that would take the attention of the visitors. Up on the hillside that dark mixing sheet of men still spread out. Ellen wished desperately that it were possible just to carry all these strangers off to the country. But that was not feasible. John, she too saw, must stay here. He was showing plainly, to her eyes, how distressingly he was feeling this combination of responsibilities. But they walked on past the houses of the brief street.

Before the Marshes' new little box of a house, they found Mrs. Marsh calmly setting out plants, turning an apparently indifferent back to the anxieties of the street. But she came forward when they spoke, dusting the soil from her fingers that she might offer a friendly hand to the newcomers.

"I got these plants from Mrs. Winter yesterday," she said, "and they just must be set out today. I thought it was cool enough so that I did not need to wait for evening. Won't you come in?"

Ellen knew that Mrs. Marsh was too good a gardener to be setting out plants in the middle of a May day. But her own heart recognized the difficulty of waiting uninformed within doors while danger skirmished in the open. The simple homeliness of the performance and the words,

ignoring the dramatic outside of the occasion, seemed to give a sudden change to the day. Ellen saw a temporary natural solution of her present difficulty, and John grasped at it. In a moment the women had all become Mrs. Marsh's visitors and the men had gone on, released to follow the chief interest. Miss Brewster brightened in a sober sort of way and relaxed her nerves and set her mind industriously to the subject of gardening. Mrs. Marsh, a wiry neat-featured little black-eyed woman, gave herself energetically to the exposition of housekeeping in a new land. She exchanged glances of understanding with the quiet Ellen, but went on busily with talk on anything but the possibility of danger.

John turned back quickly to take his valuable horses from their places and find a spot of concealment for them in the ravine that ran toward the river. Then he came back toward the hill, his eyes searching all groups again for Harvey.

Up on the hillside, near the now empty Robinson house, Major Donaldson formally accepted the report of deputy Fain. Then turning to his huge and motley "posse" he officially dismissed them.

But that was not to be all.

He added, "Sheriff Jones has some writs to execute and you are at liberty to organize as his posse."

This was the trick! Thus the loyalty of the town had been turned against itself. Had this mob come in as Jones' followers Lawrence would have met it armed. But skulking in under the authority of the government, it found law-abiding citizens, not fighting men.

Sheriff Jones rode before them, greeted with yells of applause. No leader, it would seem, had ever more devoted or joyous followers. They were his, freely and fully. The last hope of Lawrence was gone.

He had, he assured them, writs to execute and a score to settle and his own assassination to avenge. He picked twenty men and led them off into the town. The remaining hundreds were marched in some sort of order down to

the lower hillside. They were ill-trained to orderly moving and a soldier would have thought it a ramshackle square into which they were formed.

Then Atchison, once acting Vice-president and still Senator but absenting himself from Congress at this time for better-loved duties, came forward with words for the occasion, words which history has preserved.

"Boys, this is the happiest day of my life! We have entered this damned town and taught the abolitionists a lesson they will remember till the day they die. And now, boys, we will go in again with our highly honorable Jones and test the strength of that damned Free State Hotel and teach the Emigrant Aid Society that Kansas will be ours. Boys, ladies should and I hope will, be respected by every gentleman." None laughed. "But when a woman takes upon herself the garb of a soldier by carrying a Sharps rifle, then she is no longer worthy of respect. Trample her under foot as you would a snake.

"Now, boys, I know you will do your duty to yourselves and to your southern friends. If one man or woman dare to stand before you, blow them to hell with a chunk of cold lead!"

Other flowers of profanity blossomed in his speech. Even tradition has not preserved them all. His voice carried to the spot, rode away, where John Truman waited with other Free State men, reconnoitering.

"The Vice-president has a fine command of language," said Stivers grimly. "The United States Senate must enjoy his sweet and chaste tongue."

But turning to John he found his face pale and his eyes gleaming white fury. "Come on!" he muttered and they all sped down the slope and on to the hotel.

XXIII

IN Mrs. Marsh's little square front room the women sat, hearing Mrs. Marsh's bright staccato talk. "Talk about seeing eye to eye," she had chirped as she seated them, "we see knee to knee when we sit here. Sometimes I wish our family room at home could see these quarters. It would think it had been eating prickly pear."

Ellen sat in severe discomfort. Her position would have been difficult enough without the responsibility for these new-comers. Had John yet managed to send Amos or Harvey out to Phœbe? Should John leave the town? Should she go out alone? She sat still, firmly keeping a fixed faint smile on her face while she tumbled her anxieties about in her mind. As for these women, protection of their peace of mind seemed to lie in her hands. She and Mrs. Marsh were instinctively and tacitly uniting to preserve it. It would be cruelty to introduce these strangers all at once to the shame and anxiety of the country. She could not take them back to the hotel—nor could they stay here indefinitely—nor could she take them out to the farm. She could only wait, desperately, and with Mrs. Marsh's help keep an assumption of calm she could not feel.

A deep sound broke through the light voices of the room —a sound which brought them all to their feet, white and questioning, Miss Brewster reaching tremblingly for a supporting hand. Each woman gave herself a moment of horror before she drew her forces together. They all turned to the windows, but could get no clear view to the west.

"I must go!" cried Ellen. "I must see!"

People were running past, some toward the hotel, some back to their homes.

"We'll all go," said Mrs. Marsh. Yet with her movements perfectly under command she went hastily about

fastening windows and doors. Mrs. Sayle watched her in amazement and Miss Brewster wrung frantic hands.

"Haven't you anything to put away?" Ellen asked quietly, as she helped slip bars in place on the narrow windows.

"I did more than one kind of gardening this morning," Mrs. Marsh answered as quietly.

They hurried into the street with the others. The whole little town seemed a crowd. The alert quiet of the morning was gone. Lawrence itself had moved toward the hotel. In a larger ring enclosing the inhabitants the invaders hovered, in malignant, scarcely-maintained waiting. An open space set the hotel apart. Before it a pile of furniture, the solid furnishings Colonel Eldridge had brought for the comfort of the town, lay tumbled, often broken.

"Oh, our things!" cried Miss Brewster. "Mary!" frantically.

"Never mind, Agnes," said Mrs. Sayle with a reassuring hand on her arm. "They're not there. Charles was going to see to them."

A group of men at the end of the space leading to the hotel drew apart in readiness for something and the cannon was disclosed, ready to discharge again. "Our own cannon!" cried Ellen. It was their own cherished weapon, secured with such contrivance, received with such triumph, now given up as a final and futile proof of good faith. The men of Lawrence looked on in dark and desperate indignation while their enemies prepared ostentatiously to fire again. "Now!" cried Jones with a flourish, and the path for the missile was widened and the gun went off with a roar. The building stood untouched and Lawrence could not restrain a jeer. "Move it up nearer," was the cry. "You couldn't hit a little thing like that a mile away."

Jones, infuriated, directed the reloading and aiming under the hands of his untrained helpers. Again the cannon roared—again with no result.

"Put it inside," suggested a tall roughly-dressed man from the north side of the river. "You ought to be able

to hit one side at least." Grim laughter came from the throats of the Lawrence men.

Once more unaccustomed hands though willing aimed and loaded and fired the weapon. The ball splintered the corner of a house to the left of the building.

"Set it on fire!" cried Jones fiercely, and no laughter followed. His men sprang to the entrances of the building. Some wrecked furniture and smashed it to kindling to start their fires. Others scattered through the rooms seeking for portable plunder. The childish and savage came together in them. Some destroyed for the mere pleasure of the crackle and the smash; others stole absurdly whatever they found moveable, for the elementary pleasure of illegal acquisition. Lawrence found no cause for laughter as flames broke from half a dozen windows.

The whole crowd watched the scene in silence for a few minutes, Lawrence men and women with choking throats and dumb lips. Then the border ruffians with yells of delight at their accomplishment, turned to the town. "The place is yours," said Jones and Atchison. And theirs they made it.

No man could ever afterward tell fully what his feelings were as he impotently saw these men entering his house for wanton, insulting destruction; no woman to her latest day could easily speak of the moment when they laid brutal and vulgar hands on the hardly-possessed things out of which she had made her new scantily-furnished home. Nothing in her life of ownership and home-making could have prepared her for this sacrilege. Women defended and defied even more than their men could—the men falsely and bewilderingly tied by a foresight looking to future state interests, and by the form of loyalty to which they had committed themselves. Open battle would have been one thing; this gross assault upon the homely familiar things of life was quite another, bitterer in its pettiness and insult than any warfare could be. The southerners romped fiercely through the houses, ransacking and choosing or discarding like ignorant children, gluttonous or destructive for their own entertainment. They tossed fur-

nishings into the street and tore or smashed or fired with heavy mirth or clumsy malevolence. Hardly controlled men or grieved and angry women came after them to rescue where they could or put out fires or bring their possessions back into decent privacy.

In the midst of all this the hotel continued to burn.

In such grim and horrid sport the afternoon went on. Ellen could not come near John though she saw him in the crowd and knew that he was not forgetting her safety. She saw Horace Evans once and he bowed to her with a look of distress and humiliation but did not come nearer, though she had a feeling for some time that he was keeping her in sight with a sort of remote guardianship. But this bit of decent humanity amidst so much inhumanity rather angered than reassured her. To see a man in this body lift his hat to a woman seemed almost like an outrageous jest. Judge Sayle was often with them, saying a supporting word or interpreting the West to his frenzied sister-in-law with grim humor.

Ellen tried to lend a hand to harassed friends here and there or to comfort terrified children. A piece of jocularity which found favor with the milder ruffians was to rip open bed-ticks or pillows and scatter their contents.

"You'll sleep thin tonight," said one merry man, as he ended his jest by flinging the empty cases down into the well and went on his way to fire the stable.

"If we sleep at all we'll do well," said the young wife whose "setting-out" he was thus handling.

"Let me take your baby for a little," begged Ellen standing near in futile sympathy.

"Oh no!" said the woman with such ready firmness that Ellen did not persist. The long robes of the baby the woman held to her shoulder concealed the pistol her husband had bidden her not lay aside that day.

Near her another woman sat on some broken furniture and cried over the pieces of a fancy picture-frame, where tiny cones and shells from her New England shore were stuck into a design on a basis of putty.

"Let us go up on the hillside," said Ellen at last in a sort of desperation. Alone she would have found occupa-

tion and perhaps usefulness, but companioned as she was she could only look on and suffer. Judge Sayle led them up some rods along the grassy slope, past the last scattered houses that fringed the town. There were no southern men near them and they seated themselves on the green spring grass and looked down on the wild scene below. There Mrs. Marsh presently joined them bringing her neighbors, Mrs. Atwater and her little boy.

"My home is burned," said Mrs. Atwater quietly. Her husband was one of those men who had absented themselves on this day rather than engage not to fight. She seated herself and gave attention to the wants and fear of her little boy.

"How can you women be so brave?" said Mrs. Sayle in admiration.

"You get to the point where there is nothing else left to be," said Mrs. Marsh. "We don't want to be brave any more than anybody else does." She herself relaxed and sat pulling nervously at the green blades of grass and looking intently down at the town.

Ellen too allowed herself preoccupation and anxiety. She could not think that, busy as these despoilers were with the town today, there could be any danger to anyone outside of its precincts. But her mind recurred to Phœbe and the boys. Even if Harvey had gone out there or Amos, she feared that the deep ardor of the one or the fiery young gallantry of the other might be insufficient protection for the home. And yet even these men had not yet harmed women or children, except to destroy their homes and possessions. As she had said before, they were American men after all and the worst could not be expected of them. Ellen had long ago inured herself to the notion that their house might some day be burned.

But most of all, now, her mind went back to John's face, as she had seen it across an opening in the crowd when Jones fired the cannon. Other men looked grim or indignant or even sad, but John's face wore a fury, a hungry anger, which made it seem not a familiar face but a mere clothing for an unfamiliar passion. She could never have imagined for him such violence of feeling. She held the

picture before her mind and examined it. It seemed to her that before she met John again she must know that look and the unknown man behind it. With all her joyful acceptance of new elements in life, she had never dreamed of wishing to find a man in him other than the one she had always known.

It was strange enough to sit here in the Maytime grass and flowers and look down on the dark figures swarming restlessly and malevolently among the little houses, and the piles here and there bursting into blaze, and in the middle the solid upward smoke of the hotel. It was enough to try to comprehend this calamity in full and the force of these evil-planning men. It was stranger still to meditate, with all this, upon the identity of the husband whose motive and feeling she thought she had always known. What action would follow upon the furious passion of that face, she feared to know.

A group of reconnoitering men rode at a little distance from the women, up past the Robinson house. They saw the men look and one of them take aim, and a shot flung past them and pierced the earth a rod or two away. Another followed and then with loud concerted laughter the men moved on. The Lawrence women sat still, more amazed than terrified.

"Mary!" gasped Miss Brewster. "I've got to faint!"

"Hush, Agnes," said her sister, shaking her arm with firm sisterly authority. "This is no time for such a performance. Keep your wits about you."

Miss Brewster drew a quivering breath and tried to face every point of the compass at once.

Ellen arose. She must find John and they must go back home. If such men as these, who taunted unarmed women with shots, were abroad—! They could not speed fast enough to Phœbe and the boys!

Judge Sayle came toward them. He had found some rooms in an unmolested house and had taken his luggage to it. In the town the fierce brutal play was over and men—some of them strangely adorned with their newly-acquired possessions—were collecting in groups to move away.

John stood with Stivers and Amos near one of the two newspaper offices. All the type and cases from both the presses had been taken down to the river and thrown in.

"Let us go home, John," said Ellen quietly, restraining herself yet from looking too closely at him.

"I'll get the horses," said John turning away. "Stivers, will you bring my wife out as far as Wightman's? I'll come there."

But Ellen had time to say friendly and solicitous goodbyes to the Sayles and to exchange words with other friends and then to wait long under the care of Stivers and white silent Amos, before John appeared.

The border ruffians were scattering from the town. Their leaders had gone, carrying away their prisoners to Lecompton. "This is the happiest day of my life," Jones, like Atchison, had declared before he departed, his score with Lawrence settled for the time,—"happy as a rattlesnake," Stivers said. The people of Lawrence were beginning to move about in a wordless dispirited way, taking account of what had been their homes. Tears came to Ellen's eyes as she realized what these other eyes were seeing. She knew as well as anyone how deep such practical tragedy may be, and she felt almost as sorry for the women who lamented their broken dishes and lost beds as for the men whose rights and principles had been violated.

At last John came, driving a strange team.

"Our team was taken," he said briefly. "I had to get these."

Their beautiful team—one of the best in the country! John was a real horse-lover. Stivers grimly helped Ellen to her seat without a word. Ellen turned for a last look and saw the Robinson house in flames.

As they drove away a man at the edge of town, standing by a smoking haystack, called bitterly to John, "You're one of them that told us not to fight!"

"I never will again," said John with answering bitterness.

He said little more even to Ellen and she did not try to reach into his mood with searching remark or question. She left aside the perplexity he furnished her and gathered her spirits for what she might find at the end of their way.

XXIV

HARVEY was slow to leave so absorbing a scene, even after John discovered him and directed him to go to the protection of Phœbe. He could not believe that any of the border ruffians would absent themselves today from this triumph to wander out on the prairie for any less attractive sport. So he lingered and lingered until reminded that if he was to preserve even the form of keeping his promise he must be off.

Out at home Phœbe and the boys celebrated their domination of the place with many unusual occupations, designed to make time pass unnoticed. At last Phœbe withdrew her assistance from the boys' well-digging and betook herself to a book at a window in easy sight of them. The afternoon was well on and she unconsciously relaxed into a feeling of relief that her guardianship would soon be over. All day no one had come near the house and she had only once or twice seen horsemen passing, and they at a distance and unconcerned with her. Had it not been for this pervading menace which no one could put from his mind, it would have seemed only a lovely peaceful day, full of May as hours could be. The boys played happily at their toy engineering and Phœbe finally read absorbingly.

She heard distant hoofs once and roused herself to listen. But no sound followed and she returned to her book. Suddenly a shadow slanted across the window-sill and she looked up to see the figure of a man outside. With quick protective instinct she glanced first aside, to see the boys still at play, as yet unaware of the visitor. Then she looked straight into the cool face before her and waited for the man to speak.

"Oh, it's you, my beautiful lady," he said. "What good fortune to meet you again!" He took off his hat with a sweep.

Something in his jeering politeness was familiar and Phœbe looked again. He was the man of the Wakarusa road. She rose and moved aside a step so as to reach her pistol and slip it behind her. The man's taunting eye read her movement.

"A gun is inappropriate to a lady in a bower," he said.

"That depends on where the bower is and who comes to it," said Phœbe.

She felt less trepidation since she had recognized the man, even though he was of such quality. The fact that she had once outwitted him gave her a degree of confidence for the encounter, and the curve of the pistol handle fitted her hand firmly and warmly.

He leaned on the sill and brought his face within the window frame. "You flitted away when I saw you before. You will hardly be cruel enough to do that this time." He smiled impudently and tauntingly. Even with his coarse offensiveness something of debonair quality still hung about him, something that had once been a bit of grace and gallantry, now sorely damaged. In all her preoccupation Phœbe gave a curious thought to the past of such a man. "You will be sorry to know that when you shone upon us for a moment that day we had nothing more important in hand than a runaway nigger that had found friends of his kind among the Yankees. You may have pleased yourself with thinking you were breaking up a dark plot. We got the nigger." The man seemed rougher than he had before, as if the rude intervening months had left their mark upon him.

"I don't remember taking any pleasure in the occasion," said Phœbe.

"This is the hand you cut across," he went on, stretching a deliberate hand toward her. She drew back another step.

"It isn't far to the door," he said lifting himself upright.

"If you come in at that door I'll shoot you," said Phœbe.

"These beautiful Yankee women," said the bandit. "So fierce and terrible." He reached back and took a heavy

pistol from his hip. "I suppose you have shot at a mark and think you can shoot." He handled his weapon lightly. "I think since you are so kind as to ask me, I'll come inside."

He stood idle for a minute though, to allow terror to have its full effect upon her. Phœbe would have fired then, but she knew that his hand would be far quicker than hers, and her movement futile. She wished, not so much for John's strength and marksmanship as for Ellen's wit and quickness. She knew Ellen would find a way, were she here. And Ellen's boys and Ellen's home to be saved! Her hand at her side she gently pulled back the hammer and bade her finger move the instant the man opened the door.

But he was in no haste to move and lolled indolently at the window frame, with half an impudent eye appraising the farm steading.

"Truman—I hear that's the name—has a good start here," he said. "Too bad it won't do him any good. It will burn well. He's a Yankee worker. Niggers would be wasted on them." Then he looked at Phœbe again and took on his extravagant offensive tone. "I believe you are even more beautiful when you are a little afraid," he said. He did not move, however, but stood as if there were more enjoyment for him in announcing villainy than in executing it—as if to terrorize Phœbe would give him more pleasure than to do her or the place injury.

But while he stood as if waiting for her entreaty of mercy the sound of horses' feet was heard. Phœbe from her place could not see what was coming before the house, but she saw the man listen and then turn to look. His expression of jeering confidence changed to belligerent challenge. Then Horace Evans came before the window and looked in, past the ruffian's arm. Phœbe standing there, pale but straight and composed, looked back at him and greeted him quietly. But the pistol in her hand told him the story. He turned on the man with a look as quick and fierce as a shot.

"Were you annoying this lady?"

"She has been kind enough to entertain me," drawled

the other. "Do you have the first claim on her?" His tone was as offensive as his words. It was evident he did not know where to place the new-comer. Evans controlled himself with a slow effort.

"You've made a mistake," he said. "This place and everyone on it, children and all, are to be left alone today. I am Horace Evans of Platte County."

Whether Evans' name meant anything to the man or not, Platte County evidently did. His belligerence became more tentative. But he watched Evans curiously.

With a quick authoritative movement Evans led him aside, beyond Phœbe's hearing. Only from their gestures could she guess what passed. The stranger continued impudent, jaunty, vulgar. His hand went to his weapon once and Phœbe took a step forward and raised her own arm. But Evans voice rang out sharply and his hand lifted his pistol. It seemed to be not by arms but by force of word that he was finally effective, however, when the man said truculently, "I'll be damned if I will!" and yet turned and walked to his horse. Perhaps he had never really intended anything worse than to terrorize a girl who had once outwitted him and who was difficult to terrorize.

Evans watched him out of sight and then with a cheerful word to the boys, who had at last given over their excavating to watch with interest these quarreling men, came up to the window.

"Miss Murray!" he said in a tone of deep humiliation.

"I am very grateful to you, Mr. Evans," said Phœbe. She could not say less, but her gratitude was stringently modified. Rescuer and threatening villain were too nearly in the same class today. And yet, as he leaned toward her, solicitude and embarrassment in his fine face, shamed apology in gesture and attitude, she dissociated him a little from the scene which had passed.

"I couldn't tell you half my shame at this," he said.

Phœbe relaxed the hold of her hand on her pistol and openly laid it on the table near her. She couldn't compel herself to give any more cordial sign.

"It was a fortunate coincidence for me that you were near," she said.

He felt the question, perhaps satire, in her remark. "When the worst men of our side are abroad it is necessary also for the better ones to be out," he said.

"When your party is abroad protection is certainly necessary," she answered soberly.

He flushed deeply but lifted his head with dignity. "I can't acknowledge that I should be thought of with such men as this ruffian. In my own place I should not have to prove my standing to you."

"I can't reproach you for being here today," said Phœbe more gently. "Yet your men are out for mischief," she added more sharply on second thought. "Why are you here?"

"I saw your friends in Lawrence and took the liberty of riding on to see if you were safe. This is no time for women to be left alone." He did not speak of what was going on in Lawrence.

"When Kansas is left to itself, women—and children—are unmolested."

"This is not the South that you see coming here."

"Only its chosen agents. And they seem to have been selected to represent it."

"I have to acknowledge it. Honorable men, who would not put their hand to a dishonorable thing, choose these villains and send them here for what they think must be a violent piece of work. I wish you would believe me when I say they have no notion what kind of people they are attacking. If they could see you—" He stopped. "Miss Murray," he said, "it is the bitterest thing that could be to me, to know that you are threatened by those whom you naturally associate with me."

He put a hand on the window frame and leaned nearer to her. Even in his voluntary subordination there was dignity in his fine air and a kind of graciousness always in the phrasing of his soft southern voice. He waited a moment but Phœbe said nothing.

"I cannot hope, I suppose, from you or your people, the friendship I must crave when I see you. Is it fair that political difference should make complete separation

between people who have a real likeness?—as I venture to say."

"It is more than political," cried Phœbe, a little flush rising to her cheeks. "It is moral," she said with a slight effort, dropping her voice.

"I think I have a right to deny that," he said firmly. "Slavery is not the most important question in the world."

"It is enough to involve many others. See what men it brings here, and for what purpose!"

"Every cause has men who support it vilely as well as those who support it fairly. Do you think you will be willing to sponsor everything that is done on the Free State side?"

"I hope so!" cried Phœbe.

"You think every man will be on your level or John Truman's! There may yet be things you will hate as I hate having these ruffians frighten women."

Through the window in the other side, beyond Phœbe, she heard hard-galloping hoofs but he seemed not to note them. "Miss Murray," he said with yet deeper earnestness, "I wish that you could see me as I believe I am. If it were not for slavery—only a political question—I believe that you and yours might accept me as a friend."

Phœbe, the direct and unafraid, hesitated. She waited for the right modification for her reply. Then quick racing steps crossed the yard and beyond Evans' asking gesture she saw the pale furious face of Lewis Hardie.

"Miss Murray!" he cried. "Have you been disturbed?"

"Not by Mr. Evans," said Phœbe quickly. "He drove way a ruffian who was threatening the place. I am greatly indebted to him."

"I was glad to happen here in time to be of service," said Evans turning gravely. He made a movement as if to offer his hand. At other times he had shaken hands with Hardie. But now Hardie, coming from the scene in Lawrence, looked him in the face with stern accusing glance.

"If Miss Murray will allow me I will stay until her friends come home," he said. "It is better that she should be protected by one of her own people."

Evans flushed. "I venture to think that I have some things in common with Miss Murray," he said, giving back Hardie's look.

"I have seen something of your party already this afternoon," said Hardie.

Phœbe came nearer to the window in embarrassed discomfort. She made a deprecating gesture and would have spoken. But the small Owen, coming to tug another pail of water to fill their well, discovered his friend Hardie and rushed forward.

"Misser 'Ardie! Misser 'Ardie!" he piped, assaulting Hardie with muddied hands.

"Hello, I O U!" cried Hardie, picking him up with great demonstration of welcome. He was glad to change to a different tone. Matthew also rushed up with much shouting over their playmate.

Evans turned to Phœbe for a last word. "I trust you are to have no more annoyance, Miss Murray. I count it my good fortune that I was at hand today." Phœbe came close to the window and gave him her hand. "You have my deepest thanks," she said quietly.

He bowed formally to Hardie and went to his horse. But Phœbe felt that this would not be the last time when he would watch over her safety from afar. Yet she knew also that he would never again come so close to her in speech as he had today.

"He must lead a lonely life if he lives with his party," Hardie said, looking after him. Then he turned to Phœbe and looked at her for a long moment.

"I feel like a high-born maiden in a palace-tower," said Phœbe with a laugh, "interviewing successive rescuers through the turret window." She hesitated. "Will all you men come inside?"

But the boys went back to their engineering. Hardie came eagerly through the door. "Phœbe!" he cried, taking her hands. "Were you in danger?"

"When did you come back?" answered Phœbe. "Not real danger. I had my pistol."

"Oh heavens!—a pistol! This is no country for women. You must go back until this is over."

"Nonsense," said Phœbe withdrawing her hands. "Ellen needs me," she added in a minute, "and I'm not afraid."

"You don't understand," he cried. "We are in terror for you women all the time. We think of you every minute we are away from you and imagine horrible things that could happen. You don't know what men can suffer in that way. When I saw John and Ellen in the crowd today when I came back and realized that you were alone perhaps!" He drew a long breath. Apparently he hardly realized how much he was saying. "If you women would go back to a safe country and come here again when it is time for making a home and living home relations—" He flushed deeply and paused.

"Our grandmothers saw as hard times as these," said Phœbe. "Do you think we are so much poorer?"

"You don't understand. This whole territory is going to be a battleground. Men gladly fight for their homes but they don't take women and children into battle with them. That is what this amounts to. Do you know that Atchison's men are sacking and burning in Lawrence today?"

"What!—And Ellen and John?"

"I saw them. They are all right. But John couldn't leave until he had seen the worst, of course. And Ellen had women on her hands and couldn't come away. It has been horrible in Lawrence. I don't see how we can keep our hands off these beasts much longer."

"Did they—were there murders?"

"I saw none today. But this is as bad. It says we can come here to fight but we can't settle—we can't live! And the East won't see! I've gone up and down and back and forth and talked and told and told again, and they won't understand. I've seen Congressmen and Judges and a Governor and they all have their eyes so full of the coming election that they care nothing for right or humanity. I'm sick of politicians. They think we are all out here fighting because we are that kind and that it's six of one and half a dozen of the other. And then I come back and find the government behind this outrage here today. Sacking a helpless village—hundreds of men at it! The

Sheriff and the Federal Marshal setting them on! But you must not stay here. I am going to get John to send Ellen home."

In spite of her distress Phœbe broke into a laugh. "Ellen will quietly obey, no doubt."

"Perhaps she will be willing after today," said Hardie grimly. "She has never seen anything like this. And there may be worse."

"You don't think women are of the stuff to take a share in this," said Phœbe quietly.

"I think men shouldn't be of the stuff to let them. There is a safe place for them and men should see that they are there. When I think that beasts like these can even cross your path—"

Unusual color glowed in Phœbe's cheeks and her gray eyes looked warm challenge at Hardie for a moment, a challenge he did not interpret. Then she moved aside to look after the ways of the boys.

Hardie withdrew his mind from his own fervent mood to recognize a denial, and antagonism, in her. What it meant he could not tell, and his certainty of the rightness of his own feeling did not allow him to analyze. There had been all these months when her time and occupations had been without him. He wished he could somehow put himself into them.

"Tell me about yourself and the spring," he said, following her movement away from him. He looked well and tall and physically effective, and he bore in dress and grooming and even in manner, signs of his sojourning in Phœbe's own land. She resented these foreign signs, vaguely. But she made her manner cordial and natural.

"It was the newest spring I ever saw," she said with a smile.

"I thought of you seeing it. I have had one spring here. I wished I could be having this one with you. Nothing could be rarer."

"That looks like Harvey and Widmer," said Phœbe. Through the window beyond her she could see a flying horseman on the road from Lawrence, the same road over

which the two men before him had come. Harvey it was, and his coming was almost as much of a relief to her as that of either of his predecessors.

"Phœbe!" cried Harvey, leaving a stamping and prancing Widmer at the horse-post and dashing in at the door. "Are you safe?"

"I've been rescued twice this afternoon," said Phœbe. "We'll call this the third time. You should have got here sooner to do any real rescuing."

"I had to help some people," said Harvey vaguely. "How are you, Hardie!" He greeted him warmly. All his words were marked with a preoccupation of excitement. "Didn't you just get here on the day! It must have been your trunk they were burning when I left."

"My box is in Westport Landing," said Hardie calmly. "They may be sacrificing it down there."

Phœbe questioned eagerly and Harvey, troubled by none of the instinctive reserve shown by the other two men, answered with furious account of all he had seen.

"Half a dozen times I was on the point of shooting one of the villains," he said, "but somebody always stopped me. I suppose it would have started the whole fireworks. That was what the beasts wanted most. They were just itching to shoot up the whole town. Gad! I wish Jim Lane had been there! We'd have shown them something. I'd have been here awhile ago, but I found a woman crying and her little boy in spasms and I waited to hunt up Doc Tracy. It was good for him too—he was just about crazy when he didn't have something to do for somebody. I had a notion to shoot an Alabaman or two and present them to him to take his mind off his troubles. If I'm ever sick give me a chance to shoot Jones and that will make me well."

His face was serious in spite of his talk and he was profoundly moved. "To treat houses that way, and women's things!" he exclaimed fiercely. "One man put on a woman's best dress and wore it all the afternoon. Of course the most of these dogs haven't any houses or decent women belonging to them."

Phœbe was sadly silent.

"We're bad enough—letting women stand all this," said Hardie.

But Phœbe turned and went about home duties for Ellen, presently calling to Harvey to help her. Hardie had an impulse to respond in his place, according to the familiar intimacy of winter days in the family. But an uneasy instinct restrained him and he went out stiffly to renew friendship with the boys.

When John and Ellen, silently driving home with the strange team, came in sight of the house and saw it still standing, Ellen gave a little cry of relief, relaxing the tension of the last half-hour. Then remembering that there was more to be known than the mere sight of the house had revealed to her, she counted the rods passed, in tense silence, a harder moment of suspense than all this brutal day had brought her. There was smoke from the kitchen chimney, dear homely smoke—and there was Harvey's horse—and now there was Owen—and Matthew with the late sun on his yellow hair—thank God, it must be well!

But her joy had little reflection from John's grim heavy face.

XXV

THE most miserable week the Truman place had ever known passed. Phœbe, relaxed and sensitive after the strain of Wednesday, hardly resumed her light but sure poise in relation to things. Ellen was too much absorbed in waiting on John's mood to show her customary rebound from strain. No one laughed lightly in those first days.

Hours of every day John spent in Lawrence, helping to raise again the fallen homes and rehabilitate them. Ellen went also many times, lending her ready and ingenious hand to care for the forlorn children, sick in the shadow of their mothers' anxiety, or to give a semblance of naturalness to the fragments of possessions which were recovered and put into place. But her usual gay and inspiriting word was gone. She came back dreary each time. And all the while she lived in the sight of John's taciturn suffering, knowing not what his unhappiness was purposing.

On Monday night they were resting all together but silent, on the grass before the open door. Amos was with them and Harvey and Hardie, and the young Livingstones. The Babes were daily losing more of their youthfulness, and onlookers sighed tenderly to note it. Ellen and Phœbe, with little mind to give tonight to visitors who had suffered no harm, had yet received Mary with spontaneous eagerness; and someone brought out the one big padded chair of the household, known as "the chair," and another added a soft wrap to the one she wore. Hardie, looking on, considered all this individual gentleness amidst the general atmosphere of brutality. "Gentle ones will have gentleness while the world stands," he mused. "Even in the ugliness of war they would have that grace."

But in spite of tenderness they could not offer their visitors much talk at first. Ellen was listening for John's

voice, which no one heard. Hardie tried to give out interesting information gathered in his visit and they asked questions, but he shrank from offering the answers that contained so little hope. They all sat looking off into the pale darkness of the open land, with the arching sky blue in the starlight. The emptiness of the view should have held peace, and Ellen longed with all her might for a peace that would take perplexity away with it.

Phœbe, her eyes lifted to the heavens, spoke of the stars, and Hardie quickly abetted her purpose. Harvey brought out his astronomical knowledge for display and quickly involved them in a dispute over names and figures. Amos surprised them by entering the discussion with some unexpected words of knowledge.

"Those stars have looked down on strange things," he added solemnly.

From below them came a shout, and Tom Selton came running up the hill, sending his voice before him in an excited "Hey!" which promised that he had ill-tidings to dispense. "Tom Selton would do without his breakfast any day to get to carry bad news," one of his neighbors had said.

He threw his whole tale at them before he had reached their midst.

"They've murdered a whole lot of pro-slavery men over on the Pottawotamie! They say old John Brown an' his boys took 'em out of bed an' chopped 'em up an' shot 'em."

"What men?" asked John quickly.

"Old Jim Doyle was one an' his boys an' I donno the rest. They was half a dozen."

"I know that lot," said Hardie slowly. "They have deserved it—but—"

A quiet of horror fell on them all for a minute. A dark menace of future possibilities seemed to rise and shadow them. If this was true, men on their own side had done it! Had the deed been done by pro-slavery men the tale would not have borne half the shock to them—even with the recollection of last week hot in their minds.

It was Amos, the silent one, who spoke first. "It is the sword of the Lord!" he said with fervor.

"Don't fool yourself," answered Hardie sharply. "The Lord had no more to do with this than he had with sacking Lawrence last week."

"It is the Lord's cause," said Amos solemnly. "He has arisen." He left his seat and moved away a few yards from them. They could see him dimly in the dark, standing with his hands at his sides and his face lifted to the sky.

"It is infernal!" cried Harvey. "We—our side—are not the kind to do that butchering. It is utterly degraded—it's mean!" He stammered out youthful indignation.

"They took 'em right out an' chopped 'em up an' then shot 'em," affirmed Selton again.

Hardie reached out his hand in the dark and put it on the back of Phœbe's chair. "They're a rough lot down around Dutch Henry's Crossing," he said. No movement of Phœbe showed acceptance of his effort at reassurance.

"How could anyone do it?" cried Ellen. "If those men were settled over there they must have had homes—perhaps families. We didn't come out here to make children suffer."

"It was short-sighted," said Phœbe clearly, "besides everything else it was." She thought of Evans' forecast of Free State conduct.

"I know just how they could have come to do it though," said Philip Livingstone.

"They were not the only ones that needed killing," said Harvey. "They may not have been the right ones."

Mary shivered a little and put her hand into Philip's. "It's no way for men to fight," she said.

Ellen waited and listened for John's voice, still silent.

"Took 'em right out at midnight and hacked 'em up," came in Tom Selton's refrain.

"I can't believe it," said Hardie speaking out loud suddenly, his voice as tense and hard as a clenched hand. "Free State men have not come to this. It is a twisting of some tale. There is a pro-slavery hand in it. They want such a story in circulation, to go back to Congress. It will do immeasurable harm to us."

"A man come by just now from Lawrence an' he seen a man that come from Hickory Point an' he'd been down

along the Pottawotamie an' heard it an' come right up an' told it." Selton defended his tale zealously. "Everybody'd ought to know it whether they want to believe it or not," he ended in aggrieved tone.

John spoke abruptly out of his dark place in the shadow of the house. They all withdrew from their own thoughts to hear him. "There has been provocation enough for such a deed, even if we do not approve of it. Though Free State men cannot use the brutality of the slavery side we will yet have to intimidate them by some means. Somehow or other we must teach them fear. It is the only thing they can understand."

He ended definitely as if a declaration had been uttered in his words. Silence fell for a moment. Then Ellen gathered herself together with an effort. "It is probably another story like the assassination of Jones," she said.

"We are not sure yet that a Free State man did not shoot Jones," said Hardie quickly. "We cannot hope that we shall never suffer from irresponsible or weak or violent men on our own side, who will be goaded by injury or driven by fanaticism to do desperate things. It is to be expected or at least feared—and we shall all bear the blame. Worse than that, we shall hinder our own cause, and discredit it."

Hardie did not often speak so sententiously. Phœbe suspected a purpose behind his firm words.

"He did say that everybody over there thought that Old Man Brown over to Osawotamie an' his boys could tell something about it if they'd a mind to. He's got a considerable lot to say about fightin'," said Selton.

"If he did it he had a reason," said John slowly and firmly. "And I don't believe he did it, in the way that is reported. I've seen that man."

"Well, I guess some a seed him onct too often," said Selton rising. "I bet they didn't like his looks when they opened their eyes an' seed him neither."

"That man Brown has a good deal of influence down where he is," said Philip. "I've seen men from down on the Pottawotamie and they talk a lot about him. He has a patriarchal family government and a family on a patri-

archal scale and they are all devoted to the cause of abolition. He lives like John the Baptist. And he looks like Moses—no, like John Knox," he said thoughtfully considering.

"I've seen him," said Harvey. "He looks like the Day of Judgment—and hell for the wicked," he added soberly.

"He may think he is the last trump," said Hardie. "This looks like it."

"I would have faith in him," said John. "He is not to be taken lightly."

Ellen was saying nothing. She felt as if she were putting back from her with both trembling hands a thing she had never known before, fear and uncertainty. Many times now she had known alarm, but until this moment nothing that was really fear. Horror at this deed, horror at the whole fabric of this dreadful relation, a trembling before what seemed to be in John's mind—all wove a strange ghastly uncertainty, bewildering to her.

Tom Selton took himself away, still elaborating his meager knowledge of the fearful affair. The rest fell into a silence of horror.

"The moral retaliation will be dreadful—if this is true," said Hardie rousing himself.

No one answered until after some minutes John said, "I don't think so. The time had come. It was natural even though outrageous—if it is true. It must be garbled and exaggerated."

"It fits in too well with what much of the East already thinks," said Hardie.

"It is the Lord's day," said Amos. He had come back and sat among them again.

Philip and Mary rose together, though without a word of agreement between them, and began to say goodnight phrases.

"Won't you stay tonight, Mary?" said Ellen.

"Oh no. I must be with Philip," said Mary quickly and too firmly to allow urging. "Where he lodges I will lodge," she added with a little laugh. Philip swept her under his arm with a short answering laugh, but high and nervous, and led her out to the wagon-side. The moon was

rising now and the darkness was turning to delicate clear gray. The clean living smell of the fresh grass floated to them on the light steady wind.

"I'll ride over with you," said Harvey and Hardie simultaneously.

"Oh no—" began Philip, and Mary said decidedly, "No thank you, kind gentlemen, not at all."

"But Mrs. Livingstone," said Hardie, and Harvey added, "Some of those ferocious Free State men may be floating round."

"We haven't earned anything from them," said Mary. She turned and faced them all. "If I have to be afraid I'll be afraid of some one definite thing. I will not be afraid of everything in the world."

Phœbe breathed a soft sympathetic sound and Ellen came swiftly forward in impetuous feeling. But she stopped and kissed Mary in matter-of-fact way and said, "You're right, dear," and then looked at her uncovered fair hair, soft and lovely in the new moonlight and said, "Are you sure you will be warm enough?" and let her go.

And Mary drove away with Philip, calling back heartily in concert with him, "Goodnight, neighbors."

"The Babes are growing up," said Ellen softly, turning back toward the others.

"Mrs. Truman," said Hardie with a tremble in his voice, "when I think of you women out here I stand in awe at you and your courage."

Ellen said nothing and he could not see how weary she looked.

"Yes," said Harvey gravely, "I never used to think much about whether women were brave or not, the way men ought to be—but by George!" He left his enthusiasm summed up in his inadequate ejaculation.

"You are not old enough to understand it, son," said Hardie impatiently.

"We have to have the passive voice of courage," said Ellen. "The active for you. Do you think these are any hours for farmers to keep,—and great journalists and gentlemen of leisure?" she added briskly, trying to make a show of her usual spirit.

Amos had gone. He was now electing to sleep in the barnloft to protect the horses at night, and was out always before the earliest of the family. He seemed to have slipped away quietly amid the talk. They heard a chain on some padlock rattle. The others moved indoors reluctantly, loth to separate, as if feelings found protection in company.

"You cluck us to bed like a fussy yellow hen," said Harvey, complaining.

But some feeling left from the evening made him suddenly catch her about the shoulders and give her one of his sporadic cousinly kisses. And Ellen, instead of returning her customary rebuke to his impudence, felt tears come to her eyes and a sad little lump to her throat. It was his spontaneous pledge of protection to her.

John said a few sober gentle words about household affairs, matters where he relieved Ellen of care, and bade a grave goodnight to the others. Ellen felt herself set aside, even from his thoughts, on this night.

She slipped from her bed after all had been quiet for an hour and, wrapping herself, came out again into what was now bright moonlight and seated herself on the doorstep. She looked out over the rolling moonlit stretches of her world, the world she had made her own with such high spirit a year ago.

Away off there to the southeast, across those beautiful miles, was the place where, it was said, men had been cruelly murdered, murdered as if by beasts. And Free State men, the story told, had done it!

Ellen involuntarily raised an open hand as if to fling back the imputation. How grotesque it would be, a thing to make the world laugh, for Free State men to come here to establish their demand for the rights of humanity, for freedom to every race, and then to forward their cause by violence, by outrage of humanity! The throats of all the world might open to jeer at such a thing.

Besides her natural instinct for civilized and lawful performance, her reason also had supported eagerly the policy of the more influential spirits of the settlement, of

whom John had been one. "Peaceful citizens, well-armed," Eli Thayer had wished to send to Kansas, and many saw no humorous paradox in the phrase. Citizens armed for peace had come, hoping that their weapons would prevent the use of weapons. More such men were coming, and more and more. That would in the end solve the problem. Just now—yes, Governor Robinson was in prison and Andrew Reeder had defied Marshal Donaldson and then escaped in disguise, and no one knew where fiery Jim Lane was. But still Free State men came on.

Organized battle she could endure. She could bid John goodbye, if he must go, and stay at home to await the event. But guerilla warfare like this, scattered revenge, wild undirected fighting—what had that to do with a cause like theirs?

John had not said a word to show that he was making a plan or changing a purpose. Yet when she looked at him she knew him to be different from what she had known before. He had always been reserved, even with her; but behind his reserve his processes of mind had been so logical and clear and his emotions so right, that all his motives had seemed almost simple in their clarity. To know the premises of his being was to know him. And those premises were, to her mind, so just, so tender, so humane, so law-governed—Ellen would have been lost in enumeration. But what new motive might he have reached now?

Yet—she turned to the other side—might there be a lawlessness above any civic law, far above any law this wild country knew, a lawlessness as fair and wise and brave as any other principle? Did this strange primitive man down at Osawotamie have right on his side? Yet she thought of midnight murders, of fierce satisfaction in violence. That was not justice. She tried to bring reason and feeling to see clearly together.

"Ellen," said John softly behind her, "can't you sleep?"

"No, not tonight."

"Can't you come in, dear? Can't you rest?"

"I'll come in," said Ellen wearily, rising and coming through the door.

John caught her with his arm about her and drew her

close to him. "Oh, Ellen!" he cried, dropping his voice to the lowest whisper, to guard the silence of the narrow house. "I wish to God you could be spared! This should not be your suffering or your fear!"

Ellen let herself rest a moment on his solicitude, feeling and loving its tenderness. Yet she knew that tenderness was all the deeper because of a raising difference between them, across which it must now reach.

"I must have my share of suffering. I've never had much, John. You have never allowed me to suffer."

She waited for him to say more. But he was silent, only holding her closer in what seemed to be a speechless perplexity of feeling. He was not going to discuss or to reach a common conclusion with her, and Ellen presently drew herself away and went back to her bed.

In the morning Amos was gone. No one commented on his going. Everyone suspected what had drawn him. No one even smiled at the incongruity of his connecting himself with those grim warriors of the southeast country. John went about his morning work, to which Harvey also lent a light hand. No one rode into Lawrence. Hardie in a rude sort of garden chair of his own contrivance—the subject of much jest in gayer days—sat on the shady side of the house and wrote his fortnightly newspaper letter. It could not wait until this latest news was confirmed. Hardie hoped it never would be confirmed and his pen would never have to record it.

"Ellen," said John coming in after a while, "will you run me some bullets? My stock is low."

Ellen looked at him with wide questioning in her eyes. "Yes," she said simply and got out the moulds, to the great pleasure of the boys, who loved the operation.

Even Ellen could not know—no one could know, seeing John go quietly about the affairs of the place—how deep-rooted were the feelings that were working in him to bring about a settlement of purpose. Even the rage of last week had not yet wrought itself out, an anger that had stirred every element in him. Other men, like Roger Stivers or Sam Wood, might take on grim humor under affront. But

that was not for John Truman. He had spoken for non-resistance in Lawrence. And what had followed? Defense it must be hereafter.

And was even defense sufficient? If Free State men were to be fought against, must they not be first in the fight?

XXVI

HARVEY must go for a ride, he said. These few days had been restless ones for him. To Phœbe's critical look and Ellen's anxious one his "must" did not seem sufficient. So he added Widmer's need for exercise. He rode off gallantly, a pistol at his side, his powder-flask filled. He looked at the rifle, to which he had now somehow attained in the distribution of arms, but decided to leave that at home.

Widmer pranced and danced at starting, but Harvey came back in a minute to speak in at the door and say not to look for him until he came. He might go as far as the Mileses.

"Ah," said Phœbe gaily. "I had hoped you were going to stay out of danger." Harvey laughed, with a degree of pleasant consciousness, and turned Widmer again.

"It can't seem like anything but a game, with boys like Harvey and Philip going into it," said Phœbe. She felt immeasurably older than these youths of nearly her own age.

"It is a game. Even Mary doesn't realize it fully. As a game it is the same for everybody, but the stakes are different." Ellen's voice dropped a little on that.

"The stakes are high enough whether they know it or not," said Phœbe seriously. She longed poignantly to hear John discuss fully what was in his mind, and to have Ellen tell out once what distressed lack of satisfaction lay in hers. Yet she knew by some instinct that there would be nothing worse for Ellen than to put her fears and perplexities into words and thus give them more concrete body. So she helped her assiduously in all pratical ways and met her on their common ground of solicitude, but never by any sign asked confidence beyond the obvious matters before them.

Out in the June morning Harvey and Widmer tested

each other's temper and then joined themselves in enjoyment. Harvey had not yet known a perplexity so dark that a sunny sky and inspiriting wind and Widmer's rhythmic muscles under him could not lighten it. Now as he passed fleetly beyond the nearer farms and out into the open grass, his spirits rose almost to gaiety. The world was empty of people, apparently, and that was the way he for the moment preferred the world. The emptiness was rich enough for him—and he on his way to Lydia! He sang sometimes as he rode, or shouted blithe jests at ground-squirrel or quail, overcoming shyness to look at him. The distress of the last week lifted.

No pony tossed an impatient head on any hillside as he neared the Miles claim, and Harvey rode on until he came out just above the house itself, standing with the same isolated, contained air it had always worn. He circled about, with an examining eye on all parts of the place. No one knew what might have happened. There was no one around—yes, there was a woman's figure in the little patch of garden. A few rods more showed that it was Mrs. Miles and he rode boldly forward and greeted her.

Mrs. Miles looked up, not apparently either greatly startled to see a horseman or greatly reassured to see that the horseman was Harvey. She was making garden according to the best Ohio methods in a small piece of spaded-up sod. Harvey, the youthful, thought impatiently that she seemed more than ever like a creature keeping up instinctively the habitual motions of the jungle after it had been transferred to the desert. But he faithfully went over with her the geography of the little garden patch and all its experiments. And then he asked for Lydia.

"Yes, she is quite well, thank you. She is doing some writing for her father."

"May I see her?"

"Yes. She will be glad to see some one—to see you," she corrected herself politely. "She has been shut in a great deal lately. Lydia!" She raised her voice a little and Lydia appeared at the door and in a minute Harvey was with her, inside the little house, while the mother returned to her gardening.

Lydia greeted him seriously, earnestly.

"You are all right—you are safe?" he burst out. "It is dreadful in these times not to have your friends where you can see them always."

"We have not been harmed," said Lydia. "The men sometimes ride past here, but they have never tried to hurt us." Harvey exclaimed but she went on. "When there was the raid in Lawrence Captain John Brown and his party came up near here and then they heard that the raid was over and they could not stop it so they turned and went back home. Father was going on with them if they had gone but it was too late. Were you in it?"

"I saw it all."

"Father was disappointed that they did not fight. If he had been there in time he would have tried to make them fight. He says they ought to defend themselves and a little bit over, at least. I wish I could fight."

"You—you! I can't bear to think that such dreadfulness should ever come in sight of you."

Lydia shook her head slowly. Then she stopped and smiled at him, her soft lovely impersonal smile.

"It is a long while since I saw you," she said.

"I'm glad you recognize that," he cried. "I was afraid it might seem to you to happen too often."

"No," she said seriously. "On the days when I ride I wish I could meet you, though I know that you are probably very far away. I could go farther if you were with me. Father hasn't been willing for me to do more than just ride round and round here lately."

"No, it isn't safe," Harvey approved the restriction wisely. "Women shouldn't take any risks."

"I think women should do their share just as men should. I want to do something."

Harvey looked with a kind of exquisite wonder on her glow of desire and zeal. The contrast between her fine loveliness and the ugly brutality of this thing she saw herself fighting, had no absurdity to his young mind—only what he took for sublimity. Such rarity as this must be cared for by strength and chivalry.

"It is man's place to fight," he said gravely

"But what is woman's place? They ought to help some way. And fighting is the chief thing out here. It won't be time for anything else until the fighting is done. I should be proud to help some way in that. Women have done it."

Her eyes darkened solemnly and Harvey looked in awe on the white vision and devotion of her face. He reached out gravely and touched her hand reverently and then clasped it. The two young souls stood looking solemnly at each other, Lydia seeking an answering consecration in Harvey's face, Harvey only worshipping the spirit he saw in hers.

"Don't think of fighting, Lydia," he said boyishly. "Think of me," he entreated suddenly, dropping his voice. "Won't you think of me?"

"I do," she said simply. "I do often. Sometimes when I should be thinking of duty or my father or the cause, I am thinking of you."

Harvey looked at her in grateful wonder. "Oh, Lydia," he said. "How sweet you are!" And his young arms were about her and his lips softly and reverently touching hers. Then he drew back a little, in shy question of his own temerity.

But Lydia, though she flushed a little, smiled at him faintly and his trepidation faded a degree. "Lydia," he said, "I love you. Are you sorry?"

"No," she said. "I think it is wonderful that you love me." She touched him gently. "I didn't know it was love at first when I wanted you to come and wanted to see you so much. But I know it must be now. It is beautiful, Harvey, isn't it?" She shone upon him softly.

"It is you that is beautiful," said Harvey. "Your eyes are wonderful, Lydia. I used to wonder if they could ever shine on me as they do for the poor negroes." He kissed her again and she kissed him in return.

"It makes me happy just to have you in my mind," she said. Then she withdrew herself gently.

"Is it right for us to be like this when there is so much to do and such suffering all around? It seems to me it isn't right for one to be anything or do anything for himself

until abolition is settled, here at least. Oh, Harvey, think of the suffering and the wicked wrong, and how can we be happy or take things for ourselves? I should not even love you."

"I couldn't bear it if you didn't. But what can we do that we are not doing? We are giving our whole living out here to it now. That is more than the Abolitionists are doing. What more need we do?"

"Fight!" said Lydia. Harvey started at her vehemence. "Men will have to fight and women will have to send them and to help them. Father has gone over to be with Captain John Brown. He thinks John Brown is to be the leader of all of this. He is a great man and he thinks the whole country should rise and fight."

"Have you seen him?"

"Yes, he was in the house one day and he talked to my father and I listened. He is a sad burdened old man, it seemed to me, and I wished I could do something for him. But he is fiery too, and strong. He makes you know that he wants to help the negroes most terribly. I wish that I could do something to help. Harvey—are you going out where they are fighting?"

"Do you want me to, Lydia?"

"I don't—but I do, dreadfully. All good men and brave men must go. It seems to me I can't bear it if you are not out there fighting."

"Some men—good ones too—think there should not be any such fighting. They think our best fighting is just living here."

"But that is not enough. It is too slow. And while they wait men and women are dying in slavery. I think of them at night and of the little children that are born slaves. Nobody should be born a slave. We must hurry, hurry!"

Her glowing face and lighted eyes meant more than all the arguments of sober bearded men. And desire for battle had long hung in the back of Harvey's mind.

"I wish I could go!" she cried again.

"I will go!" said Harvey quickly, reaching a resolve that had been waiting for him for days past.

Lydia gleamed highly upon him for a moment and then flung tender detaining arms about him. "I can't bear it," she cried. "It may be danger for you. But you must go. Nobody can take your duty away from you. You wouldn't love me if I wanted you to stay away from right and danger."

They clung together, youth finding love when on the brink of being separated by great hazard—but not realizing fully either hazard or love. What should rightfully have been their moment of new talk of love was overshadowed by this great solemn thing which their young responsibility bade them find their share in. It was their hour as no other hour in the world would ever be, but they freely gave it to talk of duty and devotion.

Harvey, the laughter-loving and laughter-making, was deeply solemn. An older person could have wept and tenderly smiled at his responsible young acceptance of the chance of tragedy, he not yet knowing all that such tragedy could mean.

"I'll go back home," he said, "and see how they are to be left and leave Widmer there. I daren't take him over yonder. And then I'll go over to Osawotamie and look for John Brown. Lydia—after all this is over I'll have you?"

"You have me now, as much as can ever be. If you didn't I couldn't send you away. You are like myself going out to battle."

Then they talked of love, just shyly finding the knowledge and the language of it. And then Harvey went away.

Lydia went out to her mother, still gardening systematically and industriously. "Harvey is going over to Osawotamie to help," she said. Mrs. Miles lifted an apparently matter-of-fact look to her daughter's glorified face. "Well," she said, "my man has gone."

Harvey did not leave Widmer at home after all. It seemed to him he could not go off to any chance of great experience and leave Widmer behind. So on a lovely blue and gold and green morning they galloped off southward, Widmer soberly testing a new mood of his master's.

XXVII

THE day when John Truman rode away toward the southeast—the fierce angry country where John Brown now hid his men in daytime woods or led them out to midnight hunting—was for Ellen Truman the most poignantly bitter of all her days. It seemed to her as she watched his brief and quiet preparations and saw him go away over green hills and lost his dark figure at last on a blue horizon line, that she must be exhausting all her feeling for years to come. One could not often suffer like this.

She thought she knew the exact moment when his decision was made. Amos had come back the night before and put his tired horse in the stable and gratefully eaten the late meal she prepared for him and sat with them in his usual remote silence until he went off to the yards with John to attend to some caretaking there. Then they heard him talking clearly and definitely and heard John's voice in repeated question. In the morning he was gone again after a solitary breakfast of cold bread some time in the hours of dawn.

Ellen heard John slip from his bed just as Amos brought out his horse. A few words passed between them out there in the quiet, and then Amos rode away. Ellen lifted herself from her pillow and looked through the open window beside her. Out there between her and the dawn-touched sky John stood, looking off to the east, a black figure, stiff as if cast, against that sweet pale rose of morning. He was looking toward Lawrence, and on past Lawrence, she knew, toward that country where the sun was now rising and where men might even under this very sun meet in fight. Then came a moment when his attitude relaxed and he lifted his head with firm definite movement and turned and strode back. Something was decided in that moment,

she knew. She braced all her feeling to await the announcement of it.

All the morning John busied himself quietly about the place and gave many directions to the boy who now helped him and looked with a providing eye upon household arrangements. Then he saddled his horse and strapped a slim bag of feed and a rifle behind the saddle. He took a stock of the bullets Ellen had made, and filled his powder-flask and pistol and carefully examined the weapons he was leaving behind.

Then he called Ellen into their own little room and closed the door.

"Ellen," he said, "—my love!" Then he paused, as if to gather his feelings and purposes into words were too hard. "I must go over to join the men with John Brown at Osawotamie. There is to be more fighting there. I can see nothing else to do. We must fight, and fight like those ruffians themselves if necessary. They despise our tolerance and self-control. We must meet them on their own ground."

"I think you are wrong, John," said Ellen, drawing on all her forces for control. She spoke quietly, as if only arguing on opinions. "We can't meet these men on their own ground. We don't live on such a ground. We are not such men. Unnecessary fighting will only bring us that much nearer to them. And every fight will make two more such fights."

"There is nothing else in sight for us. Shall we endure such outrages as we have been suffering? It isn't in men to do it. I can't be forced into the place of a coward. Ellen, you don't know what we men have been living under."

It seemed apparent what a woman's answer to this might be, but Ellen was silent.

"Forgive me, Ellen, if I am wrong." He took her in his arms and looked at her in a kind of agony. But Ellen, maintaining her control still, could not yield herself completely. "It is torture either to go or to stay. Oh, Ellen!" His perplexity and anxiety for once cried out. "But your danger will be no less if I stay here and it is the only way

to make you safe in the end. I will be gone only a little while at a time and I will be back and forth all the time. We citizens cannot any longer stand these insults to ourselves and to the very principles of our government—even if the government itself has forgotten what principles are!" he ended bitterly. It was the sorest thing he could have said. "I must go!" he said. "I can't do anything else!"

There was the fierceness of battle in his last kiss, and he rode away hard. Ellen looked after him from her bedroom window.

The blue horizon took him and he passed out of sight. Ellen flung herself on her bed for a moment's indulgence of the loneliness and grief and—she acknowledged it for the first time—fear, which she faced. What was before her looked like a medley of fearful possibilities, each one awful to herself and her home. She shivered and buried her face in the pillow, desperately. She heard the boys at play outside and Phœbe's light step in the next room as she went about the housework, and an occasional homely farm sound from farther away. All this—which her home was made up of—was on her hands; and who knew what moment wild ugly danger might come to it? She understood, with a realization novel to her, that while she had been used to lift her head lightly and step easily along what seemed to be her own independent way, she had really taken her confidence and poise largely from her awareness of the quiet well-judging strength of John always in her background, ready always to sustain her or to supplement her. Had that judgment now failed her?

Yet even now she exonerated John of any failure of duty to her or the home. He was not forgetting care of her or of the boys. He was only going out to meet the danger far away and strike it down instead of waiting for it to come to them. She could accept that purpose. Lawrence was quiet for the time, supposedly subdued. They were probably as safe with John away as with him there, to draw malevolent attack possibly. Other men had gone away from their homes, on purpose to save it from likelihood of attack. John was not exposing her thoughtlessly.

But she thought of the danger he had gone out to meet. And she thought of those midnight bludgeonings, of those liers-in-wait for men—of John annexing his high honest devotion with purposes like that!

XXVIII

HARDIE rode out as the long day grew into sunset. Ellen told him frankly where her men had gone.

"Harvey," he said in a tone which implied that nothing else was to be expected. "But John!" He controlled instantly the look of indignation that flashed to his face, but Ellen saw and partly resented it. Hardie's attitude on the matter of guerilla fighting they all knew well. His recent visit to the East had made him all the firmer regarding the policy of non-provocation.

"I thought John agreed with the rest of us. I didn't think he would really go. He's joined the fire-eating Browns, has he? Well," in a different tone, "every man has had provocation enough." In a moment he said, "Harvey shouldn't have gone. This is a game for cautious and seasoned men like John to play, but a boy like Harvey may get hurt." He spoke as if Harvey at the most risked a broken arm or a sprained ankle. But his comfortable limited kind of uneasiness—though neither woman believed in it—seemed such a rational commonplace sort of anxiety in comparison with the heavy fear with which they lived, that though not deceived by it they illogically relaxed into greater ease.

"I'm going back into town," said Hardie presently, "to attend to some things. But I'm coming back to sleep in the barn tonight. I'll bring out my buffalo-robe and blankets and I'll turn into Amos' nest. Bob can sleep in the house or wherever he belongs."

Bob was the boy John had left on the farm. He was a stolid sort of youth, of a squatter family who had thus far taken no sides on the slavery issue. Territorial or national questions had little interest for them. "They'll never take sides on anything bigger than a family row," John had said after observing them closely. But Bob was

honest in his way and devoted, in an astonished sort of fashion, to Ellen and to Phœbe as a lesser star. They were sure he would bring no trouble on them, and that he would be faithful, at least up to a limit, in an emergency.

Hardie saw something in Ellen's face as he made his suggestion, which caused him to sit down again and talk along in a casual practical fashion for a while. Had he seemed to make, without intention, a tacit implication that a duty which should have been John's was being left undone?

"You know, Mrs. Ellen," he said seriously before he was through, "John and I don't agree about this fighting at all, though I didn't really know it until now, he has been so quiet lately. But somehow when I see him do a thing it seems as if it must be right, no matter what I thought before. I feel sure that I shall never go out fighting with John Brown, but when John goes I am at least certain that he saw sufficient reason. Why,"—he changed his tone—"if I came out here and found him beating you I should immediately be convinced that you had deserved it. I doubt if I should even try to stop him."

Ellen laughed at his travesty and forgave him for what had seemed his silent criticism.

"And right or wrong," he said more earnestly, "or both, as most of us are, he is a man to abide by. As a boy I was a great hero-worshipper, but I have never loved a man more deeply than I have him." He ended as if speaking to himself, not as saying anything that it would satisfy Ellen to hear.

He came back after dark had fallen and slept in the stables and was gone when they rose in the morning. But he came again the next night and Ellen slept deeper than she otherwise would have done. It was many days before she discovered that he was sleeping, not on the hay at the stables, but on the ground before the house-door.

It was Phœbe who discovered him first, when she slipped silently through the house in an early morning hour and came out into the vague dewy greenness of the vanishing twilight. She wanted the world to herself for a moment. In these days when all their landscape was inhabited by

a pervading menace, a danger hourly promising approach, the world was not theirs as it had been in the earlier days. These threatening men who might come at any moment, occupied the green spaces almost as completely as if they actually moved in them. But these early hours seemed safe, whether they were or no, and unoccupied.

Phœbe stood on the wide step and watched the soft pink of the earth-obscured dawn lift itself from the gray horizon and moved silently upward into the upper blue. It was like the one natural thing in a strange world. She clasped her hands behind her head and lifted her face toward the rising glow of the sky with a freedom of movement and a sweet absorption of mood she rarely allowed herself in these late days. For once nothing was between her and the sky—a noble sky, opening a day of brightness and color. She needed all its greatness, she said to herself, and all the sustaining its beauty could give. These days since the raid had been the most distressed Phœbe had ever known, every hour filled with intense silent sympathy and no corresponding activity to ease the strain of it.

She dropped her arms presently and something made her bring her look to earth. There almost at her feet, lay Hardie on his buffalo robe. In the gray moments when she had emerged from the door, she had not seen him. He now lay awake, his eyes wide but still, as if looking alone were all he would ever ask. Phœbe herself could not have known how lovely she looked in the still faint light with the soft rose of the sky shining on her uplifted face, and her reserve and withdrawal for once lost in feeling.

"Oh—you!" he breathed. "To come with that light on your face! You are all the highest sweetness of life."

He lifted himself a little from his place and drew himself nearer, his eyes still on her face. Then he reached gently to touch the hem of her dress and kiss it reverently.

"You know I worship you," he said.

Phœbe remained a moment looking down at him as if almost acquiescing in his mood. Then she abruptly drew away, her softer mood gone.

"I will not be worshipped," she said.

"You can't help it while I am alive," he answered. The

words sounded like a bit of his usual half-light humor, but there was nothing but utmost seriousness in his look. They had both spoken low and their hushed tones seemed the more intense. He sprang to his feet as she turned to enter the house again. "Phœbe," he begged.

"You will waken the house," she said, "and the longer they sleep the better."

"Come away," he entreated. "Give me just a moment of morning, and you. There may never be such an hour again. Come back into the rosy light. Come!"

Phœbe, conscious of the sleeping house and of the preciousness of these last quiet hours—perhaps with a contradiction in her own feeling—yielded to his words and to the urgent touch of his hand. They walked away a little across the grass, toward where the pink sky glowed momentarily more roseate. Under it birds waked and soft morning winds bent the grass-tops. But morning was still young and day with its hardness and strain seemed remote.

Hardie paused, his hand closing over Phœbe's reluctant one. "While I live," he repeated solemnly, "while I live. You can't help the worship that is laid before you."

"I can avoid the evincement of it," said Phœbe in a moment firmly, recovering her assertion of denial. "I won't have kissings of the hem of my garment."

"It is more than I deserve," said Hardie humbly. "You live like a star. I can't tell you at what a height I see you. To see how you go through this and bear it day after day, in a place where no woman should be. Oh, it is intolerable," he exclaimed, losing himself in his feeling, "that all the men of this place can't keep suffering and danger away from women. I nearly die of shame when I think of it!"

Quick words arose in Phœbe's mind, but she looked on the weariness and high feeling in his face and repressed them. She remembered too how she had seen him, where he had lain all night on the ground guarding their door. She must accept the limitations of what she called his medievalism along with its knightliness, she thought.

"Women have a right to suffering and danger," she

said gently, "as well as anyone. Would you keep us away from real living?"

"I would put you into the kind of living you were meant to have. Oh, Phœbe, let me take you back to your own safe country and bring you here again when all this is over. It will be in a few years."

"No!" said Phœbe, far more sharply than she had intended.

Hardie was silent a moment, repulsed, and startled. "Do you mean that you will never listen to me or my feeling at all?"

"I don't think that I could make you understand all that I mean," said Phœbe very gently. She looked at him a little wistfully and gave a soft little sigh, as she turned away. "There is the cheek of the sun," she said.

They heard Bob at the stables. Phœbe turned back and gave Hardie her hand for a moment and smiled upon him, a little sadly. But whether she meant pity or compunction or what, he could not tell.

XXIX

AMOS and then Harvey and now John, had gone away to the south, where the Marais des Cygnes softly rolled its June waters down toward the Missouri line. In that fevered country fighting had gone on weekly. Since the raid on Lawrence, since the black night of Dutch Henry's Crossing, men had met in battle at hot noon and early morning and dim evening—Black Jack, Palmyra, Prairie City, Osawotamie—while Federal troops brought from Leavenworth disciplined the victors and reminded them querulously that they had no warrant for war. Through this whole terrified country settlers abode in anxiety. The more honest their intentions the more they had to risk; but ruffians and adventurers were finding life well suited to their hand.

Through it and toward these remote fighting points, John Truman rode. He went solitary; some feeling made him desire it so. More than once as he went forward he saw a load of brutally ravished household goods driving away from a house, and a weeping woman or angry man watching its departure. At one place where he stopped to ask for a drink they told him that passing ruffians had thrown filth and refuse into the well and that there was no safe water within a mile. At another house a woman wrung her hands over her wounded husband, shot in the shoulder by some night marauder. John stopped to help her nervous fingers dress the wound more effectively and to draw information from the man. Then with sterner eyes and harder mouth he rode forward.

He was nearing the place now. One man's name was in every mouth, in glorification or in blame. "Old John Brown"—the name suited equally well to jeering or to admiration—possessed this region. Hopes and curses and alarms all dealt with him. He was here—he was there—he had fought—he would fight—his plan was this—his

following was that. Prairie and timber alike whispered of him. Even the open solitary places John Truman crossed seemed never empty of his name. The wind on the grass and the breath of the woods were loud with fear and anger and furious partizanship. It seemed to John with his sensitive and quickened imagination, that he was never alone with himself even in the remote green places, for they were all vocal with plans of hate.

He came to the place where the Brown cabins were, and where the pale wives and children of the many sons looked out in scared inquiry upon every stranger. They could not tell him where their men were, but they looked on the fine face of this man and the compassionate eyes which did not fail to see the privations of these women, and told him to ride on to the south a few miles. And John, his heart both burning and sad for these pale women, looked to his arms and rode on.

Within an hour after he had reached the place he was in battle. He had been passed on by one cautious questioner after another with more and more significant acceptance, until he found himself admitted to the green depths of a wide ravine through which a negligible little stream trickled. He dismounted and led his horse. There were many footprints and signs of passage, but no path. He wound his way past underbrush and among tree-trunks. The place was quiet, quiet even for the woods, and it seemed to him that as he went on he would find somewhere the center of this hush. Birds did not sing, but hid or moved silently among screening of boughs, and the thin little stream ran stealthily. John himself seemed to move with a secretiveness his steps had never known before.

Then at last as he cautiously rounded a clump of hazelbrush he suddenly found himself at the edge of an opening where the larger trees stood scattered and underbrush had been cut away. Two dozen men—three dozen—he could not tell how many—were gathered here. The men were in no order, but stood alone silent or consulted quietly in small groups. John's heart leaped. Even a first glance at these men told their purpose. This was what he had

come to seek and to give himself to. His eye searched for the central figure. Among many men of obvious vigor and determination, it might not be easy at once to find it. Then, a little apart, in a group that listened to the eager words of a youth who had apparently entered with news, he saw John Brown—Old John Brown.

He stood bare-headed and seemed even more gaunt and stern than he had months before. His straight thick upstanding hair, the heavy shadowed lines running down beside his mouth, gave the effect of strange length to his face. His deep intense eyes gleamed as he listened to the boy. Other men spoke up quickly but they all waited also on John Brown's word. His sharp phrases rang out clearly between the exclamations of the others, but at the most incisive they had still a sort of solemnity. Then as the men fell back into place he turned to cast a comprehensive eye over the whole body, standing a little apart as a leader. John still watched him, and the influence of his former prejudice made him judge the man shrewdly and a little critically. He had the leadership of fierce enthusiasm rather than power of organization, Truman thought. But how far might that stern self-urging enthusiasm lead? That solemn eager purpose—could any man of fine thought resist it?

In their absorption few had attended to Truman. Half a dozen, chiefly acquaintances from days of defense of Lawrence, recognized him, enough to give the others guarantee of his right to be there. But as a whole they were different from men he had drilled with at Lawrence or sat in conference with. If he was to fight he could have wished to fight beside Fraser or Hardie or Wood. The company seemed to be made up, he thought, largely of enthusiasts like Amos and rough belligerents like Mose Litener and Dick Milton. He saw both these men here. He looked for Amos and Harvey and found neither. Some man pointed to the underbrush behind them, and he led his horse to tether among the others—Widmer whinnied a welcome and he looked again for Harvey—and then came back among the other men.

Something—not conscious importance or dignity—kept

him from coming forward to arrest Brown's attention. But in a moment, as he surveyed his force, Brown saw the newcomer and came toward him. He could have scarcely remembered seeing him in Lawrence, but John's striking figure and his bearing and face might convince any one that this was no haphazard recruit.

Brown stopped before him and looked at him intently from his deep sad eyes.

"Are you joining us?" he asked.

"Yes," said John simply, "I'm Truman, from Lawrence." He had supposed beforehand that he would say more, but when the moment came he had no desire for further words. He was all absorbed in reading the look of this strange man.

A gleam of satisfaction crossed John Brown's face as he heard the word Lawrence and saw the manner of man before him. A wilder intensity came to his eyes. "All Lawrence should be fighting," he said sternly. "No man should endure what they have endured."

From the rim of the ravine a man hurried down to him and Brown moved away listening to him. Truman turned to a stranger beside him and asked the plan of action on foot.

Somewhere near—the man was indefinite—Captain Pate of the Missouri militia was in command of a body of men, they did not know how many. Over there—the man waved vaguely—Pate had camped last night and today he was moving on, scouts said, toward Osawotamie. If he did, his road came within a mile of this place. A group of anti-slavery men would cross his path, moving casually, and draw his fire and pursuit—to this place where these men now stood. It was a simple plan of ambush.

John Truman repressed quickly the sharp sickness of feeling that came with his realization of the plan. This was only war and war was what he had come out for. He looked about again, placing himself, in relation to all of this. Men about him talked in low voices or in whispers and waited with hand on rifle or pistol. As the time of waiting grew longer the strange man beside him recited further, in jerky interrupted whispers, the history of the

last few days. There had been spying, looting, shooting at random, cautious skirmishing, a man killed on each side, a capture and recapture, "all gee-haw" the man said. The enemy had been reinforced from Leavenworth by more "hell-chickens." The man was abundantly profane in an easy colloquial fashion, his tongue curving smoothly around his oaths while his eyes never for a moment ceased to search the crevices of their leafy enclosure and his finger kept a light alertness on his rifle-trigger.

As John listened to the summary of outrage his revolt of spirit passed and his bitter indignation returned. Let it be ambush and bullets—yes.

Galloping hoofs came along above their timber screen. In a moment four or five men came leaping down the bank, dragging their cautious sliding horses behind them.

"They're coming in below!" they cried. "They're right after us!" A few rods below, the bank ended with a sudden drop and woods spread out almost on a level with the stream.

"Face about!" said John Brown. He moved them forward some yards. "Get cover when you can," he said. The trees were thicker here than above.

They waited in place, every man's hand on his weapon. In all John Truman's hard experience of the last year he yet had not stood up rifle in hand and faced other men, with intent to hurt.

Shots cut sharply across the strained expectancy. It was almost a relief. Men changed their stiffened poses with freshened purpose and energy. The shots came from a higher level and went over their heads. A horse of one of the decoys, tethered on the bank behind them, screamed and sank struggling. The other animals, in the background, snorted and trembled, pulling at their tethers.

"Wait until they are nearer," said John Brown. His voice rang out clearly and commandingly. He now seemed all fire and energy. As they halted a minute longer a slight figure crept easily through the hazel-brush on the opposite bank and leaped lightly across the stream and approached John Brown. John Truman glanced aside

without turning his head and saw Harvey. He had evidently been learning the territory on the other side of the stream.

In the same instant came another volley, striking lower. Off to one side a man gave a little cry and caught at his wounded shoulder. The man beside John swore sharply, clutched at his side and sank gasping. "My God!" he cried, turning himself to right and left imploringly. What a moment before had been an oath became now an agonized prayer.

They moved forward, across a little gully that crept down into the ravine. "Fire!" was the command, and they fired as they went, at the vague mark of the green covert. Their volley had three times the volume of the enemy's. John suddenly found Harvey at his side. "Hello, John!" he said and grinned genially. But John examining him in one long sharp look saw that even these few days of his absence had marked him; he looked thin and unnaturally distressed. That smile at sight of John had more of relief than of cheerfulness in it. There was a sickness of spirit in his young face as he looked over his shoulder at the man on the ground behind them. Yet he lifted his weapon. with stern determination, too much determination, one could see. "Did you see Widmer?" he asked then, turning back. A man beyond said shortly, "He's all right. I put him with mine," and there was no more speech.

They all moved forward quickly and plunged down into the little gully and leaped up its soft bank. Here, where the larger trees grew scattered, some sought individual shield behind their trunks while others waited among the hazel-brush and sumach. Every man fired, according to his own judgment. The position of the enemy was clear and the Free State men made their way forward, moving from tree to tree and firing intermittently, Brown always in the lead. The pro-slavery shots passed closely among them or glanced from the trees. Each body, unable to guess at the force of the other, hesitated to make a rush. But the space between them was narrowing.

Harvey was still near John, crouching behind a thick little tangle of wild plum. His weapon—the rifle he had

gained with so much pride—was at his shoulder. But through it all he had not fired, and he was very pale The cry of a horse behind them, down near the creek, a wounded horse, came to his ear and he sprang up and took a quick involuntary step in that direction, away from his shelter. Out in front, nearer than they had known anyone to be, one of Pate's men stepped into a clear space and fired and Harvey fell, almost at John's feet.

The man flung up a taunting exulting hand before he dropped back again behind the shielding tree. But John had seen that the rough hating face was Jim North's.

XXX

THE frenzy and fiasco of that brief battle were afterward vague in John Truman's mind. The delayed Free State volleys clanged in his ears while he stood arrested, his rifle idle in his hand. Men rushed past him furiously, and looking across Harvey's body he saw the pell-mell retreat of Pate's men, carrying their wounded with them. Their horses were at hand while the Free State horses were many rods in the rear. So they made their escape, and one more bootless fight was over.

But Harvey was dead.

He lay where he had fallen and any stranger's first thought would have been the pity of losing what was so fine and young and beautiful.

"I feel as if it's goodbye, John," he gasped as John knelt beside him with exclamations of agony. "I won't have a chance to fight after all."

He struggled painfully and then spoke more faintly, "Tell Lydia Miles—you know—that I was doing what she wanted me to—what I wanted to," he added more firmly, with effort. "If it had only helped against slavery. I wish I could see Ellen—and her," he said, and said no more.

John's agonized ministrations counted for nothing, though he continued them until a rough man passing said, "That fellow's gone."

"I must take him home," he said at last rising. But Harvey lay on the ground between the plum thicket and an oak tree for hours before a driver with team and wagon could be found. Many came to look at his youth and fine comeliness and some shook their heads sadly and others said sternly that there must be such fortune. John Brown himself stopped with a word of pity and gesture of sharp sadness. One man with yellowed gray hair and

wild eyes advised that the boy be buried there. "One place is as good as another for those who die in a good cause."

At last John found a man who would take the risk of the long drive and another who would ride on ahead to carry the news to Ellen and Phœbe. He shrank from sending that message and grieved under the necessity for it. He wrote it painfully, sitting on the ground by Harvey's side and scrawling in his note-book and looking from it to Harvey's face; and then looking away again lest he be too much overcome. The boy was so out of place here, in a condition to which he had not yet matured. "Oh, Harvey!" cried John. "Forgive the world!"

He tied his own horse and Widmer behind the wagon when they had put Harvey on hay in the wagon-bed, and started sadly on their long drive. They wished to get well beyond the neighborhood of Osawotamie before dark. Twilight was settling down upon their road when the steady pound of horses' feet behind them began to reach their ears. Both men strained their attention. Horses were coming on fast. The driver began to urge his team forward saying, "Of course it may be all right, but—" They took up their weapons. John thought of the valuable Widmer, prancing disdainfully at the end of his halter, and faced about to the road behind.

Then finally at a few rods distant one of the riders raised his voice in a shout. "Truman! John!"

"Halloo!" answered John, and Amos and Miles came pounding alongside the wagon. The driver, seeing them, relaxed in a relief that was almost sickening. He dropped the lines and for a moment sank his face in his hands. "I don't mind fightin'," he said, "but not over a dead man."

"I had been down to Burlington," said Amos, "and got back just after you left. Then I hunted up Miles." He looked at the dark slender length in the wagon-bed. Both men removed their hats and sat quiet for minutes. "Sweet boy!" said Amos quaintly. "God keep him!"

"He fought in a good fight," said Miles.

"This fight shouldn't take the flowers," said Amos sadly.

He reached a gentle hand to pat Widmer and Widmer nosed him in friendly way.

Then Amos and Miles fell in beside them and they went on their slow dark way. They took Harvey across wide open uplands, where they seemed near to the starlit blue sky, and forded shallow streams in little valleys where the tall coarse slough-grass was dew-soaked and the heavy air was cold. Through such places Harvey and Widmer had often gone together before, joyously. With conscious tension they passed through dark woods where every chirp of disturbed bird or crackle of twig startled them. Or they looked out across open prairie, wondering at what moment danger might emerge from that pale horizon. John could not help turning once in a while, with a gesture as of apology, to silent Harvey. The boy's laugh, his light word, seemed to follow them incongruously.

As dawn began to lift a paleness into the sky Preston Miles spoke. "You can reach my house in time for breakfast. I'll ride on and tell them."

John hesitated. Did this man know the need of gentle news-telling in his home? "Harvey sent a message to your daughter."

"Yes—likely. I'd better go on."

John dreaded their moment of arrival—an addition perhaps to the tragedy. He did not know this girl, save for a brief glimpse once or twice, nor how much lay between her and Harvey. But as the cabin came in sight and they made their slow approach to it he shrank from this new demand on his tact and feeling.

It was broad daylight. Fortunately Amos and the driver did not share John's knowledge and merely busied themselves with the horses and led them away to feed. John leaned against the wagon-box, beside Harvey, waiting. Miles came from the house with Lydia. John turned with a helping hand and pitiful look. But she walked straight beside her father and her white face, in the fresh glory the rising sun threw on it, showed no tremor. John wondered at her high beauty, which he seemed to have only half seen before. But there was love and tragedy in that face.

He wished for Ellen. With all the girl's exalted composure she was still young and unknowing. There would be a moment, he knew, when a hand like Ellen's should be there for wise sustaining. But for the instant the girl's dark eyes held more of awe and pride than of comprehending grief.

"Harvey! Harvey!" she whispered, as they helped her to the side of his rude bier. "Oh, you did right!"

But her head sank to her folded arms and they went away and left her. It was meager privacy for lover's grief. But they kept the men to the other side of the house and ate within-doors the hot breakfast which Mrs. Miles, practically care-taking as ever, prepared for them. She often went to the door to look thoughtfully at the bowed figure of Lydia, but attended always to their wants and said nothing. Miles' glance constantly went pathetically to the window beyond which the funeral wagon stood. So the girl mourned—for bier the heavy lumber wagon and pile of hay, for mort-cloth old coats picked up at camp, rifled from enemies, and strange men eating breakfast within sound of her grief.

They could not linger further. They would change teams here with Miles and could be home in a few hours more. The other men went for the horses and John and Miles came back to Lydia.

She gave a long relinquishing look and adjusted the covers, and came away. "I can't help crying," she said clearly. "And I am going to let myself cry. It is sad for him and it will be sad for me all my life and will have to be. But he's the man who went for me—and I'm proud. If all men would go out as he did slavery would be over soon."

She looked back at the wagon. "Father, will you take me over there tomorrow? It is right for me to go." She looked appealingly at John.

"Yes, it is, my child," he said. "You must come to us."

She would have turned back to the wagon again, but her mother came and gently and competently took her away, as Amos and the driver came with the horses. John dreaded the sound of weeping as they went away. But

instead as he looked back he saw Lydia in the doorway, watching them out of sight.

"Great heavens!" he said. "If a mere girl among our women can be like that!" His heart burned, man-wise, for the griefs of women—and for courage more tragic than grief.

His thoughts turned forward to the next meeting, when he should take Harvey to Ellen and Phœbe. Through those long hot miles, while the June sun rose higher and the grass-blades seemed to pulsate before his eyes in the heat-waves touching them, he dreaded ever more sharply the moment that was to come at the end of this sad way.

But Ellen at the door to receive them had no words or thought for unhappy reproof. It was an Ellen suffused with tender grief, full of care-taking as if this were only a hurt or ill Harvey that was brought home, full of soft half-cajoling words and sweet touches and pathetic sympathy, and then of quick definite directions for things to be done. The men seemed clumsy—even Hardie seemed slow and bewildered before her prompt and definite thought. Only Phœbe worked swiftly with her and had responding words almost as tender and understanding as hers. It was Harvey the pleasure-maker, the playfellow, they were caring for, a broken and sad playfellow, but never quite without the remainder for them of past joyousness.

But at the ending of the last sad office for him Ellen stopped with a little bitter cry—"Oh, Harvey dear, wasn't there a better one than you for them to take?"

In the moment of greeting, which John had so dreaded, he had found himself in secondary place, left there in Ellen's preoccupation of feeling. It was strange to find Ellen, in any stress of emotion, not directing the deepest expression of it to him. But now she said under her breath, "Oh, Harvey boy, Harvey boy!" with distant eyes looking at a tragedy beyond the mere fact of death. Yet when John approached, with his own eyes of self-accusing grief and hesitant hand ready for a caress, Ellen came back quickly to practical things—letters and messages and simple arrangements. There was no rebuff in her manner; but

John knew without telling that that fight in the woods, under John Brown's leading, had defined in concrete symbol, a thing that already lay between them.

He told her of Lydia, so far as his knowledge went, and of her probable coming.

"Oh, the poor child!" cried Ellen. "The poor children! Wasn't one tragedy enough, without multiplying it!"

She made ready to receive the unknown girl, commiserating both her grief and the situation in which she must come to this strange place. She hastened to meet Lydia, when her father drove her to the door, with kindly arms and protecting, sustaining ways. But she was startled at sight of the widowed girl she met—no bowed shrinking child, such as she had fancied. Lydia lifted her white face openly and clearly and wore no hesitancy of shy grief. But for all her pallor and stillness—partly because of it—she was yet so vivid, bore such a clear vigor of inner life, that Ellen's sense of shielding and screening dropped away. Her first thought was, "I wish Harvey could see how beautiful she is, mourning for him." Mere happiness, she knew, had never brought such white light to a face like this one.

The house swarmed with men that afternoon, coming and going with sad or stern or fierce faces. Some sat awhile in talk with John, arguing or inquiring. A hint of challenging disagreement was reduced by regard for the occasion. Phœbe as she went steadily to and fro compared this in her mind with well-ordered funeral scenes in Harvey's New England, with their whispered recognition of death and their shrouded decencies.

The next morning they all went once more to the little prairie cemetery. Ellen Truman had been there many times since she first went there to lay Jim North's poor baby in the ground. And each time she had gone away praying, as she had the first time, "O God, let me bring none of mine here!" Now she came with the boy North had shot, over whose death he had waved that jeering triumphant hand. She shivered as the place came in sight today and thought, "Has it begun? Is this only the beginning for us?"

The most of the village was there this morning; for Har-

vey in his bright goings and comings had made acquaintance with all and lightened some moment for many with gay kindliness. "Harvey's a great philanderer with gray hairs," Roger Stivers said once as he watched Harvey's friendship with the few old men of the place. Serious-faced men and a few sad-faced women had toiled up the long hill and across its far-looking summit for goodbye to this presence of youth and charm and gaiety.

Martin Laird read a quiet service as they stood about the grave. The prairie grass, tall in its June height, kept a deep murmurous accompaniment and the meadow-lark whistled near. The blossoming grass no longer wore the simple green of April, but gleamed in soft variegation of tone, shadows of mauve and rose, where the wind tossed its rich depths. "But would this fairness ever bear anything but discord and sadness?" men asked in the depression of this morning.

"Another martyr to our righteous cause," said Martin Laird solemnly. And Roger Stivers and Hardie could almost have smiled. Who in all the world could associate Harvey with martyrdom? Hardie's gleam of a smile ended grimly. What incongruity—what bitterness and strangeness to give to sweet youth! His eyes rested on Fraser with his head sunk on his breast, on Winter with his shoulders drooping wearily, his brown hand shading his face. He knew how heavily the dreary prospect rested on them this morning, when they saw beautiful youth bear the tragic burden of this war.

The service closed. Martin Laird ended lingeringly, as if wondering whether he had done office for the boy as fully as might be. Neighbors took up the shovels and threw some earth with bits of sod and flowers clinging to it, in on the rude box. The little gathering turned back, to follow their way down the hill. Ellen laid her hand on Lydia, to lead her away.

Lydia put her hand gently aside and moved a step apart from her. "I want to say something," she said, lifting her voice clearly. The startled crowd looked over their

shoulders at her and turned back. They had noticed this unknown pale girl with the lighted eyes—but what strangeness was this in her? Ellen, John, Phœbe, all stiffened a moment in dismay, but made no movement to dissuade her. She stood at the foot of the open grave, with her eyes upon it. Then as the group of men and women came to attention she lifted her look.

"Harvey Sayre and I were going to have been married," she said simply, "after this fighting is over and slavery is settled. We didn't think he would be killed. I knew he might be hurt but I didn't think anyone like Harvey would be killed. But we thought it was right and he went. And now—" she made a little gesture toward the grave. "But I'm satisfied that he went. It is what we will have to do if we are to have Kansas a free state. Women will have to be sad and anxious while the men are away. And men will have to take great risks of themselves—like this. Some of them may be like Harvey Sayre. But it is the only way we can be free. And we must be free. Then after it is all over we will be proud—and satisfied, and not too sad. And there will be no more slaves in this country."

Her look when she ended had that bright expectation of greatness which Harvey had found when he first saw her. Men looked in awe upon her and then turned away, overwhelmed at her youthful acceptance of tragedy, tragedy which every woman in the country might yet know. Men with wives thought—not the first time!—of the sadness and bitterness which might be coming to their women. Women shuddered anew as they threw a backward glance at this girl and knew how much more occasion for suffering they might have than hers. Men shook thoughtful heads over her youthful words; but her ardor and her pathos alike deepened the anxiety in their hearts.

Lydia moved to Ellen's side and Ellen went with her to Miles' wagon. She begged the girl to stay with them for a few days but Lydia refused.

"I must be at home to think about it," she said.

So she rode away with her father and the household went wearily back to its place, with Harvey's chair empty and Widmer neighing in the stable.

XXXI

THAT next day John went systematically about his affairs on the place and rode to Lawrence with Hardie on business and came quietly back. Ellen knew that he had seen Walker and Abbott and other men and probably met their shrewd conservatism. In her heart she hoped that that one day of fighting had made a revelation to him that would end his militant purpose. Was not the price of that one day enough?

He had the boys with him for the last hour of the day, before the late supper, as he often did. Ellen could see them trotting along at his knee and hear their chirping little voices constantly answered seriously by his. She watched him, smiling down at their upraised absorbed faces. Could this man have been in battle only three days ago?

As they sat at the supper-table he talked steadily with the Watsons, who by some happening had not heard the news until after noon, and now had come over to see what they could do or say for the Trumans.

"I wish it had been a worse man," said kindly Henry Watson sadly.

"Or a less lovable one," added his wife. "We could have spared many better than Harvey."

"It is what we must expect if we go into offensive fight," said Henry Watson.

"We came out here expecting to pay the price," said John, without raising his voice or emphasizing his words.

"Not in this way," said Watson, with unusual sharpness.

"Harvey said he paid gladly." John had no desire to argue, yet he felt compelled to answer thus far.

"Youth is generous—too generous. We all suffer through it when it pays." Watson sighed deeply. Phœbe came into the talk with a little story of Harvey, in some characteristic light-hearted performance, and they all

laughed together a little, in a tenderness that seemed to relieve the tragedy.

"It seems as if we ought to keep back a little of his gaiety for ourselves when we lay him away," said Phœbe.

But later when John sat quiet, absorbed in his thoughts, for the first time since his return withdrawing into himself, his face fell into lines of bitter brooding. The inadequate candlelight made the shadows on it deep and dark. Ellen, watching him askance as she moved about, shrank on realizing that this look must be the sign of great perplexity.

It was even greater than she, of other temper than John, could realize. For to the sharp revolt of other days was added now his desperate anger at Harvey's fate. Moreover, in his nerves was still the consciousness of that fighting hour and of the wild satisfaction of summing up purpose and belief and justice, in battle. There was a man in him he had not known before. In all his life, years of honesty with himself, he had never known what it was to hate and condemn a thing and yet to find satisfaction in it. He could enter battle more easily the second time than the first. The talk of men he had seen in these two days at home was full of tales of outrage and meanness. All about the country Buford's men were still marauding, terrifying, murdering. In the feeling with which he responded he recognized a different quality from his indignation of old. He felt as if he had a weapon in his hand which he could lift.

Ellen, finishing at last her household tasks, came to sit beside him. John rose to bring "the chair" for her.

"I think we need a better lock and stronger door on the dugout," she said in matter-of-fact voice. "The milk and precious butter or smoked meat may disappear any time. At least it ought to make so much noise to break in that we will be sure to hear them."

"I'll see to it in the morning," said John. "At least I can reinforce the door with slabs."

He was silent a moment. "Ellen," he said, "I must go back down to Osawotamie."

Ellen, already pale with the weariness of a hard day, seemed to grow paler. "Do you think it does so much good?" she asked restrainedly.

"I think it will in the end," he answered firmly. "Some men are going with me," he added. He named them. That had been the result of his talk with men, she thought, when she had hoped he was hearing convincing argument from them. Yet, inconsistently, she felt a bit of pride in this sign of John's influence.

Something brought Lewis Hardie back the next morning. Something always brought him back, even on a day like this when he was not needed—if it were only the chance of seeing Phœbe at play with the boys, or of taking some heavy weight from her hands as she helped in Ellen's work. Out in front of the house three men with arms waited on horseback, and along the west road he saw two more coming. John was at the stable saddling his horse.

"I'm going down toward Osawotamie again," he said directly.

"I hoped that once would be enough. You know I don't agree with you at all."

"Neither do some other good men, as firm as I in the cause. But we have tried their way—and you see!"

"We haven't tried long enough. John, no matter what you do I'll always think there is some right and reason on your side and that you see it. Nothing could be more convincing to me than to have you stand for a thing. But this time I am sure that there is more reason and right on our side. I can't tell you how bitterly I hate your going out again. It is not for a man like you to do it. You have no such motive as the most of the men in that lot. And hardly any man could go who would do us so much harm."

John had paused in his preparations and leaned with his arm across his horse's neck. "The hardest thing is to find you and other men like you not in sympathy. I feel," sadly, "as if I were going into another camp. But you will agree in the end. You will see that it must be eye for eye and tooth for tooth from this on."

He strapped his rifle behind his saddle. "I'll be back every few days. The worst thing is leaving Ellen without me." He glanced about the hay-thatched shed that made a stable. "This may be burned some day when I come back. But in some ways the place is safer when I am away. I am glad to know that you are always near."

"Mrs. Truman is her own best protector," said Hardie. "She has more resources than any of us." He put his hand on John's shoulder. "It is not a parting of ways, Truman," he said. "We'll be fighting side by side when there is a battle I can join."

So John Truman rode away again, at the head of his little company. Ellen watched his strong erect figure leading the others, until they were out of sight. This time she shed no tears.

XXXII

ELLEN bore Mary and Philip much on her mind in those summer weeks and daily wished that Mary were back with her own people. A baby was coming before long—"A native Kansan, mind you!" Philip said boastfully—and Ellen considered anxiously the needs and danger of these young creatures. Brave high-spirited children as they seemed, they made a steady unconscious call on Ellen's solicitude which nothing could ease. They were not poor, like the Seltons and many other more important neighbors; but out here money could not provide for all needs. Servants were unknown and Mary needed one. Nurse—Mary laughed at the impossible notion. Other women got along with worse hardships than these.

"I'm proud that he is going to be born out here," she said. "If I had managed to get away he wouldn't have liked it, and he would ask me some day why I did it."

"As if you would have that kind of son!" cried Ellen, humoring her fantasies.

"I'm trying not to expect too much, even here," said Mary modestly.

Then they laughed. It was easy to be extravagant in talk. Even at the worst there was always amusement mixed with Ellen's anxiety for them. Their very patriotism and devotion to freedom was so delicate and charming and larklike that it seemed almost impossible to think that brutality could happen to it.

"But butterflies, they say, are broken on wheels," said Hardie when Ellen talked it over with him one day.

"I'd like to send them home—or to Arcadia or some place," said Ellen with a distressed sigh. "And yet that isn't fair. They have as much right out here as anyone."

Hardie laughed at her "right." But he went back to the Lovely Babes, as he still called them. "After all," he

said, "when we call them simply lovely we are not fair to them. There is a strength and vigor in their courage and belief that will carry them through. It is because they take their sacrifices so joyfully that we think they don't appreciate them. They are your poets, both of them."

Ellen went over the mile that lay between the houses as often as possible in those days. And when Philip was to be away from home he brought Mary to be with Ellen and Phœbe. No one risked being alone in a house that summer, and no one risked it for Mary. But neither could Ellen leave Phœbe and the boys alone, and sometimes days passed when she had no word from Mary.

For half a week she had not seen her. Then one morning, Bob working at the stables and Hardie staying about the house to write his newspaper letter, Ellen announced that the place was so thickly populated that she could be spared and she cantered over on her pony to the Livingstone cabin, on her lap a loaf of better bread than Mary or Philip could make.

No Philip came out to take her pony and she was at the door before anyone appeared. Then it was Mrs. Watson's face, serious but smiling and obviously relieved, that she saw.

Mrs. Watson made no apposite response as Ellen entered, but took the loaf of bread with the air of being the one in authority. Ellen looked about her inquiringly, then back at Mrs. Watson.

"What!" she exclaimed.

"Yes," said Mrs. Watson, sober but pleased.

"How is she?"

"Fine—you can see her."

Ellen went straight into the other room.

Mary, pale and exhausted but exultant and twinkling, lay in bed beside the pink head of her son. She could not wave her hand but she winked a triumphant finger in appropriate sign to Ellen.

"Oh, you peacock!" cried Ellen. "Aren't you just puffy-pleased with yourself?"

What should have been the beatific smile of motherhood

was almost a grin of smug pride on Mary. "Isn't it wonderful! I feel as if I were the first woman."

"Well, you're not. I have two myself and yours isn't a patch to them. And Rachel and Leah had a dozen in their family."

But she fell upon the baby to admire and adore, as though the merits of her own sons did not deny him supereminence, while Mary acquiesced in quiet rapture.

At last Ellen recalled another party to the event. "Where is Philip and how does he feel?" she asked.

Mary laughed. "Isn't it the best joke on him? He isn't here. He'll be so indignant at missing this first day."

Ellen controlled her look of shocked astonishment and Mrs. Watson explained in as matter-of-fact a way as possible. Philip had gone to Lecompton the day before, expecting to come right back. He was buying a lot of land, other men's claims, and had to go to the federal offices there because of some complication about it that must be arranged immediately. She had come over in the morning and Sam Barlow was there working on a well and would be all day, so Philip thought it a good time to risk being away for a few hours. He took his best horse and meant to ride fast and be back by the middle of the afternoon. He had not come and Sam Barlow finished and went home before they realized that it was possible Philip might not get back.

"So you two were alone!" cried Ellen looking at Mrs. Watson.

"Until my son came to keep us company," said Mary softly.

"It wasn't a dull night," said Mrs. Watson demurely. But her look at Ellen had more meaning.

"It would serve him right if I changed the baby's name before he gets here," Mary laughed.

"You've talked enough," said Mrs. Watson briskly. "You must get some sleep before Philip comes."

Mary did show herself exhausted and languid after even thus much exertion. Her eyelids were drooping, though not unrestfully. Ellen took another look at the baby and slipped out with Mrs. Watson. The women went through

the other room and through the outer door. Then they turned and faced each other, weariness and anxiety in the older woman's look, distress and solicitude in Ellen's.

"What do you think?" she cried.

"I don't know," said Mrs. Watson. "Of course he may have just thought he could save another trip by staying over till this morning for something. Those officials at Lecompton are kittle cattle. And when he went away yesterday everything seemed all right—so far as these two youngsters know anything. It's a good deal like Owen and Matthew having a baby. And of course he thought Sam Barlow would stay longer—all night perhaps. He just got through about four and went off without saying anything to us. We didn't even see him go."

"What a night for you!"

"Yes," said Mrs. Watson simply. "I've been called on for help before since I've been out here but never alone, never anything like this."

"She is too weak to be anxious now."

"Yes. She will have to have a good sleep and feel stronger before she realizes anything to worry about. And of course he may come at any minute."

Ellen laughed. "I should like to be here when he comes."

Mrs. Watson smiled also. But she shook her head. "I'm afraid," she said.

Ellen was considering. "I must go back," she planned. "I'll send Bob right over with Phœbe and some things. Then you can get some sleep. Bob can stay here with you or go back and forth on errands. I'll get them here just as soon as possible. What a blessing it was you that was with her! And that she is so well!"

She sped away, loth to leave the place for even an hour. She changed her mind though and sent Phœbe racing over to get the experienced Mrs. Laird while Bob hitched up his team. Then she found Hardie, peacefully writing in the shade of the house, his chair tilted against the wall and one heel in the air. She told him the story and he sprang up as he grasped it, white and horrified. Ellen had never seen him so moved. Anger and fear combined. Ellen her-

self had not felt half what his face showed. She had learned before this the terrible look of a man who turns white under the brown of tan.

"And those women alone!" he cried. "Oh, great God!"

He sat down again weakly and dropped his face in his hands. Tears came to Ellen's eyes, as they had not done when she stood beside Mary. It seemed as if Hardie were showing her a greater horror and pity in the scene than she had recognized herself. She turned to Phœbe, just come back panting from the Laird house, to find tears in her eyes also and in her long look at Hardie something Ellen had never seen there before. But this was not the time to give to analysis of looks.

Hardie stood up, visibly shaking off a paralyzing force of feeling.

"What are you going to do?" asked Ellen.

"Going to look for that boy. If he went no farther than Lecompton it should not be hard." His hands trembled as he put away his papers and found his hat and pistol. But his horse was out of sight before Mrs. Laird had made her way up the hill to take her place beside Bob in the wagon.

Ellen and Phœbe went about their affairs, since they could do nothing else, in a bewilderment of anxiety. Ellen lived over and over, with increasing feeling, Mrs. Watson's hours of the past night, alone in a cabin with the suffering girl, a light burning to attract marauders, herself doctor and nurse and protector combined. If Philip came back Bob would come home. If Hardie learned anything he would return. They watched both roads unceasingly.

John had been away for days, on this his latest absence, up Nebraska way with Jim Lane and some of his men. He had come home the week before, from some John Brown enterprise of which he said little, and had immediately been called for by Lane. They had gone to meet a party of immigrants who were coming in by Omaha to avoid the watch now kept along the lower Missouri, and to escort them to Lawrence or Topeka. There might be fighting and there might not. John might be home soon and he

might be gone for many more days. The home was, as it had been mostly of late, all in Ellen's hands.

It was two o'clock before Hardie rode his dripping horse to the door.

"No," he said, "he left Lecompton before five yesterday. He was seen to turn south from the Lecompton road. But that's all. Will you get me something to eat while I saddle one of John's horses? Then I'm going in to Lawrence to get some more men."

He snatched some food hastily and was off. Then they waited and watched, hopelessly now, for Bob. Ellen could hardly restrain herself from going back to the cabin. But that would leave Phœbe alone with the boys, and they might both be needed here when someone came back. It was two hours before Hardie came, with Roger Stivers and Hugh Fraser and two more men. They were heavily armed and on their best mounts. The women had never at any time seen men look sterner or darker-browed. Even Roger Stivers only shook his head in answer to their looks.

They stopped for only a few minutes to ask for news and say that they had none themselves. Ellen offered them food—the simple articles available—and they ate in their saddles while Hardie was changing back to his own horse.

"That boy should never have gone near Lecompton alone," said Roger Stivers darkly.

"He couldn't get any satisfaction about the title to his land," Ellen explained.

"The satisfaction one gets at Lecompton isn't very satisfying," answered Stivers, finishing his food at a bite and picking up his bridle-rein.

The other men said little and in a moment they were off. Hardie delayed the word to his horse to say to Phœbe's solicitous look, "We'll send word the first moment possible. If I can find Henry Watson I'll send him over to stay."

"Ellen, I must ride over there," said Phœbe. "It won't take long and they must know that the men have gone."

Ellen nodded soberly and Phœbe flew to the stables. Ellen opened her eyes to see that it was Widmer she brought out.

"It will be so much quicker," she apologized, "and he

needs the run." The impatient Widmer barely waited for her words and was off in a swift race.

Mary had slept from time to time and in her weakness and weariness seemed hardly even yet to realize the import of Philip's absence. No word had come. Mrs. Watson and Mrs. Laird had tried to absorb themselves in the novel and pleasing interest of caring for the baby—"Such a rare and normal thing to be doing," Mrs. Laird had said with a sigh. Phœbe gave enthusiastic welcome to the infant and a few soft merry words to Mary—she could not make them many—and rode swiftly back. Bob came home and did the chores and then was sent back, to stay until Mr. Watson should come.

The sun went down and the long twilight faded. They put the boys cheerfully to bed and then sat down to wait in the dark, tacitly agreeing not to go to rest yet. They sat in the doorway, looking out into the far spaces palely lighted by a young moon. Out in that dim region how many women were suffering, how many men meeting danger? After an hour or two Ellen started up as a slow step reached her ear, a single step. They waited anxiously a moment and then Martin Laird's voice said quietly, "Mrs. Truman," and they sank back in weak reaction.

Mr. Laird had been somewhat ill for several days past and Ellen had thought it impossible to call on him for help or to disturb him with the full tale of their anxiety. He dragged himself slowly in now and Ellen gave him a chair and lighted a candle while she told him the whole story.

"I will stay here," he said. But they saw his pallor and weakness and refused to allow him any exertion. Ellen saw also, however, how his thoughts were going to his wife, keeping an anxious watch in the house of the missing man.

"You can not sit up, Mr. Laird," she said, "but you shall stay here and have the first news with us. And I'm going to get you some hot milk and then let you lie on that couch there and perhaps sleep a little. There is no need for sitting up."

It did her good to bustle about a little, giving him the care he had missed all day. Then he went to sleep in spite

of his great solicitude for them. And she and Phœbe waked and slept and waked and talked a little and looked out on the empty road and waited again. Henry Watson did not come. And at last the sun came and the new day. But no word had reached them.

Bob came with daylight. There was no news at the cabin. Mary had slept a good deal but was now restless and questioning. He cared for the stock and had his breakfast and then Ellen sent him back, with some provisions for the other household. Even dull stolid Bob would be some comfort to those women.

The forenoon passed. Ellen cosseted Mr. Laird and congratulated him on the result. The day grew hot and wearying. They gave up pretense of ignoring fear and let their minds dwell openly on possibilities of harm.

It was near noon when Phœbe, coming to the door once more, saw a horseman galloping down the long-watched road. At a distance of some rods he checked his speed to approach more slowly, and Phœbe's heart sank. A man with good news hastens to the very door; one who brings tragedy delays his steps at the last.

It was Hardie, and he sprang from his horse and clasped her hands as she hurried toward him, as if he bore a trouble which must be eased a little for him by touching her. Ellen and Laird came quickly behind her, but he drew a long trembling breath, looking hungrily at Phœbe, before he spoke.

"They got him!" he said, using the crude phrasing which had come to belong to such occasion.

"Who—Buford's men?"

"Yes—the Alabamans!"

"Oh, not Philip—Philip!—why Philip?" cried Ellen.

"Why any one?" said Hardie bitterly.

The whole story they never knew. The men had found him after hours of searching, broken and beaten and unconscious, cast aside where a narrow gully ran down to touch the road and ended in a little clump of wild crab and buckberries.

They had pieced together scraps of information from

different men they had found who had watched or talked with him on that day. In a little shed eating-place where he had gone for lunch at Lecompton, he had overheard bits of talk from some of Titus' men. They spoke snarlingly of Joel Harris, who lived off to the west, and seemed to refer unguardedly to some purpose concerning him, something already planned and imminent. "I seen Livingstone watchin' 'em far too close and seen that they seen him too," said rough Done Riley, who had joined the searchers. What Philip learned or thought he learned, no one knew, but he hung cautiously about the men as if hoping for further revelations. When he finally left the settlement, about five o'clock, two of the men followed him. When later he turned from the Lawrence road and rode west toward Harris's place, it seemed to have been sign enough for them.

How or when the attack was made, whether words passed, what Philip knew of pain or brutality suffered, no one could ever know. The ruffians had gone on south, taking Philip's horse, and told their tale to no one. But Joel Harris was not attacked that night.

Two hours after Hardie, the other men came, bringing Philip in Henry Watson's wagon. He had been away when they passed the day before, helping some broken-down immigrants with the aid of his team and wagon and they had met him later. Philip was living, though still unconscious. Hardie had found a doctor in Lawrence and compelled him to come out, a rough unprofessional sort of man who worked clumsily but in spite of himself became anxious and sympathetic as he tended the wounded boy. Everyone thought of the return of Harvey, so short a time before. But the control with which Ellen had met the home-bringing of Harvey now deserted her. Tears ran down her face and often blinded her as she tried desperately to help the fumbling doctor.

But the moment came quickly when they must look in each other's faces and tremblingly say Mary's name.

"What shall we do?" asked Hardie, while the other men hung about the door, heavily waiting.

Ellen threw out her hands in desperate perplexity and

then dropped to a seat by the wooden table and sank her head in her arms, in unashamed weeping. Hardie, himself shaken with distress, touched her shoulders gently.

"Who can go over to tell her?—Who can?" she cried.

Hardie waited until her sobs slackened and then said, "You will have to."

"Oh, I can't!" she said and then added faintly, "Who will stay here then?"

"Miss Murray will," he said, and Phœbe added tremulously, "You will have to go, Ellen."

Ellen raised her head and looked at the two pairs of firm pitiful eyes. She listened to sounds from the inner room where the burly doctor worked over the moveless figure, and looked through the open door at the group of silent distressed men waiting outside. Her head sank again and the others waited for her, silently and sympathetically.

At last she arose. "I will go," she said. The others, tender and distressed, looked a pity for her greater than they could speak.

Philip still lay unconscious, unresponsive to every effort to rouse him. The doctor found his body bruised and broken, and what further hurt he could not tell. This doctor was evidently more a fortune-seeker than a physician, but with these stern men and compelling women waiting on his help he bethought himself of every resource his slender skill knew. But he still failed and Ellen, after watching him sadly for a while with suggestions from her own nursing lore, mounted the pony Rogers Stivers had saddled for her and rode with him over to where Mary Livingstone lay. While she flicked the pony's sides and shook her reins to urge him on, in spirit she tugged fiercely at them to delay his steps.

Mary was feeling stronger and looked up with determined brightness as Ellen entered.

"See—couldn't you call that a smile?" she said. "He has just remarked, 'You were the very mother I wanted. I was dreadfully afraid they were going to put another off on me.'" But her eyes begged Ellen pathetically for news.

"He got a brave mother and a noble father," said Ellen. And then she told her.

She knew that Mrs. Watson hovered just outside the door with the help she feared would be needed, and she herself kept tremblingly alert.

But Mary, white and stricken and faint, seemed to hold herself back by firm and desperate effort from the edge of unconsciousness. Ellen made excuse to lift the baby higher on her arm and she pressed him weakly to her.

"Can't he be brought here?" she asked.

"Not yet."

"When could I go there?"

"Not—not today."

"Will he die?" She dared to breathe it at last, faintly and reluctantly.

"The doctor can tell so little until he recovers consciousness. But Mary dear, he is terribly hurt."

"He can't die without seeing me—and his baby—he couldn't."

Ellen could not offer her a false encouragement or affront her courage with invention. She hung above her, trying hopelessly to soften with tenderness the blow she was dealing.

"Ellen," the girl said faintly, "I believe I'll know the very moment he is himself and I'll know whether he is going to get better or not. It doesn't seem as if after all this we could be separated. But, Ellen, tell him I'm not very sick and how beautiful the baby is. And tell him how happy I've been all the time. And say he is nobler to me than ever now."

Ellen went back to Philip. Through the night a man rode every hour or two to tell Mary that there was no change. A dozen more men gathered as the news spread, and waited furious and impotent, and more furious at their own impotence, to see how tragic the result of this latest outrage was to be. The tragedy, alas, was not unique, but every man felt sharply its black inappropriateness. All night Ellen and Phœbe, waking and watching within doors, were conscious of this angry, helpless, strong gathering outside.

It was gray daylight when at last Philip waked and spoke.

"Mary," he said, "Mary," not as calling her but only saying her name, the first word on waking. Then his eyelids drooped as though consciousness would end with that.

Ellen spoke quickly, with the impulse of staying him for a moment.

"Philip," she said clearly, "Mary—your son was born yesterday."

Her voice seemed to penetrate through the dimness about him. He half-lifted his heavy lids and smiled faintly once more his lovely boyish smile.

"Our son—Mary?" he murmured.

"Brave and fine and loving the baby, and you more than ever. Don't go away, Philip. Wait—try to wait!"

"Mary—tell her to forgive me for not staying. I'm afraid I must go. But it was all for freedom—as we always—said." His eye lighted for a moment with its old brightness and then drooped and he went back into the quiet of unconsciousness.

XXXIII

ALL through the summer John had come and gone on successive errands, the nature of which Ellen seldom knew clearly. A man would come with a note or a message and John with scanty explanation would ride away with him. Sometimes Ellen knew the call came from John Brown, sometimes she only suspected it; sometimes, she believed, John was off on his own initiative.

One time when he returned he would greet her with an ardor almost beyond his expression, as if he had escaped a danger that had well-nigh kept him from ever seeing her again. The next time he would come back in a weary discouraged silence. Ellen tried hard to make her manner always the same, neither approving nor disagreeing nor over-solicitous—nor yet indifferent. "Though how," she said to herself, "should a wife act when her husband comes back weekly from being shot at by border ruffians?" Neither security nor anxiety seemed to suit her case.

John would hasten back after a few days of absence and attend solicitously to home affairs and see that Bob was faithfully in place and that Hardie, whose service as guardian he had now tacitly accepted, was still on watch. For a little while he would absorb himself in Lawrence matters and in providing comfort and security for the home, and then he would be off again.

One day as he slipped his pistol into place in preparation for departure he turned and met Ellen's look and came back to stand beside her.

"Ellen," he said, "every day the purpose of making Kansas a free state is closer to me. We must have it. It is clearer to me all the time that that is the only way to make the beginning of a break in slavery. Don't you believe I am right in thinking my life would be a small thing to give for it, if it came to that?"

Ellen turned very pale. "But what if you should give your life and nothing should be purchased with it?"

"I shall not give it for nothing, you may be sure."

"John," said Ellen tremblingly, "you know I have not agreed with you at all, but I don't want you to think that I am not proud of your courage and even of this mistake. But oh, I think you are so wrong."

John made no argument but smoothed back her hair wistfully with a powder-marked hand and presently kissed her gently. "It would be wrong for any man with wife and children to offer his life fruitlessly," he said. "And somehow I have no fear that I shall be killed." But he went on with more difficulty, "My only question is the risk of leaving you alone or bringing harm on you. That is never out of my mind. But there will be others here —at the worst—who can take as good care of you as I could. Hardie and Fraser and Stivers and—Harvey's gone—" his voice dropped—"They don't agree with me but they will take care of you and see that you get safely out of the country—"

"Indeed, they will not!" Ellen broke in, lifting her head with an abrupt change of manner. "This is as much my state as it is theirs!" she said with spirit.

Then she laughed a little and then firmly forced tears back and John even smiled faintly, and though they had never disagreed more they were nearer together than they had been for weeks past. Yet Ellen saw John ride away no more willingly than before.

Perhaps she unaware helped to fix him in his course because he rarely returned without finding in his home some victim of pro-slavery ruffians to whom Ellen was giving temporary shelter. Some family whose house the Titus band had burned, some children whose home had been rifled of food, some youth perhaps, who had been wounded —Ellen gave shelter to them all and Phœbe helped to tend and comfort them. But John, returning home, found in these waifs each time signs of the ferocity and brutishness he was fighting and went off again with sterner punitive purpose in his heart.

Ellen could not know, in this reserve that lay between

them, with what discouragement he returned often from these strange expeditions, with what sense of futility of enterprise, of scatterment and misdirection of purpose. A general desire to fight the enemy, without any central planning, could not accomplish much, he acknowledged to himself. Still less could he speak of the spreading violence among Free State men also, the willingness not only to meet the enemy in battle, but to use its own methods and plunder and destroy and murder. Of these things he did not speak unnecessarily, though they made part of the great weariness he was beginning to bear. Yet when he came back to his own home and found Ellen, her slender hands already over-full with her own cares, ministering to a sick homeless woman or comforting bewildered orphan children, he felt himself driven out again into the fray to do what man could do.

But on this day when he was needed so sorely, his mission was a different one. It was increasingly difficult now for Free State parties to come in by way of Westport. More than one had been turned back from there after being separated from his possessions, while others had been carried forcibly past to suffer a harsh fate at Leavenworth or even passed on to a St. Joseph prison. Through this summer the unceasing stream of immigration had largely been guided across Iowa and brought down by way of southern Nebraska. And often armed Free State men had gone to meet them and bring their train over the more dangerous part of the road. Of the purpose of this expedition Ellen knew and she fully sympathized with it. For such helping as this they had come to Kansas. She had told John that if he found any of the new settlers sick or needing care he must bring them to her. "And find the house already full," said John. Even to find food for all these sojourners was no simple or easy thing.

"We've never reached the point where there wasn't room for another," answered Ellen. "Those poor women and little children on that long drive!"

John did not think it necessary to tell even her that few women or children were expected with this party, or

that the wagons were to contain more ammunition than cookstoves. But it proved an easy expedition in spite of its purpose. Colonel Lane had plainly expected attack—doubtless anticipated it with great pleasure, knowing his own resources. But the body of "militia" that came across from Leavenworth to intercept and take away their munitions, reconnoitered the camp one night, took account of its size and its order, fired some few chagrined shots, and returned to seek easier prey.

So it was an uneventful trip and they brought in their immigrants and their stores safely and added forty settlers to the party and many rifles to its equipment. John moreover had the exhilaration, never to be underestimated, of a ride with Jim Lane, an experience vivid and rich, "living two days at a time," an ardent follower said.

John rode home almost serenely, without stopping in the village for any talk. This seemed almost like an ordinary home-coming, returning to Ellen and the boys after duty done. He passed distantly in sight of the hilltop graveyard and could make out a few figures moving among its simple low makeshift headstones, and wondered who now had been brought to lie there and who were filling in the grave for him—and gave a pensive thought to the grief somewhere in far distant eastern homes because of this lonely grave.

As he came in sight of his home he saw some wagons leaving it and horses, and a wagon still standing near it. He rode by the stables hurriedly and tied his horse there and came into the house from the back. Stivers and Fraser and another man out in front spoke to him with what he noted as a kind of sad restraint. He hurried in through the house. In the disordered front room Phœbe, faint-colored and slow-moving, was setting furniture back in its accustomed places with the help of Lewis Hardie and Henry Watson. He wondered at the start, partly relief, partly disturbance, which they gave before they greeted him. Then they spoke soberly, evidently too dreary to brighten at his entrance.

"Where is Ellen?" he asked instantly, looking about.

"Over at Mary's," said Phœbe.

"She stayed with her through the funeral," Hardie explained.

"What funeral?"

"Philip's."

"Philip's! *Philip's!* Is Philip—"

Phœbe faltered and glanced appealingly at Hardie, and he explained in bare harsh statements, while Henry Watson stood by, his kindly serious face drooping and compassionate, and Phœbe grew paler and drearier as if with each telling the tragedy became deeper.

"We buried him this afternoon and Mary never saw him," Hardie concluded, his voice flat and dull. He lifted a heavy chair and put it back into place, turning away from the others.

"Wanton murder! Oh, my God!" John sank into a chair with his face in his hands. The others were silent. To see him learn the tale was to go through new suffering with a fresh realization of it themselves. John rose, to walk aimlessly about the room with fierce gesture and exclamation, and then to drop into a chair again and cover his face.

"That lovable boy!" he said at length with more composure. "He never harmed a soul and he cheered many. We needed all his nobleness. All the tragedies here come to those that deserve them least." It had seemed to the others that everything that could be said had been uttered, but they continued to listen to him in dull and acquiescing silence.

"I'll go to Ellen," he said presently, rising. It seemed to him that he could not wait an instant to see her, to see how she had borne this weight. And then he saw Phœbe's weary look and realized that they had all gone through the same without his help. He stayed for a time to take some practical matters upon himself, the heavy dull matters of a time of grief.

Later, when Mrs. Laird, who had the boys in charge, sent up word that Mr. Laird had shot a wild turkey and she had a supper ready for whoever would come down, and when Stivers and Fraser had recognized that they could not comfort themselves with any further usefulness and

shaken hands sadly and ridden away, and Phœbe and Hardie had gone down to try to eat Mrs. Laird's neighborly supper with the children, John and Henry Watson went over to where their two wives were still with the widowed Mary, guarded by neighbors who one after another offered their services for night or day. Even in all the dreary procession of tragedies of the summer, this one had stirred the region to sharp horror.

Ellen was with Mary in the bedroom, Mrs. Watson said, after relieved welcome of her own husband. John saw how close and simple and unstated was the relation of this quiet couple, as Mrs. Watson greeted her husband with a husky break in her voice which showed a loosened strain at the very sight of him, and he went silently to move back the few chairs and help her to make up the nightly bed on the floor. Mrs. Watson explained in a whisper that they hoped Mary could be made to sleep tonight. They had ventured on a mild sedative and when that began to be effective Ellen would slip out. There was no reason why Ellen should not go home then and rest. She herself would sleep the most of the night there on the floor. Henry would stay with her and there was a man at the barn too if anyone else should be needed for anything. Then she said no more but went heavily and wearily into the tiny shed kitchen and set about some new task with cautious regard for sound, and her husband sat quietly watching her.

John waited in cheerless silence. The rude little room was so characteristic of the sweet absurd life that had gone on in it, with its pieces of fine furnishing and color impractically brought from the eastern home and the rude western makeshift devices that supplemented them, fantastic yet expedient. He could imagine Philip gaily but earnestly setting about the making of these shelves and cupboards and Mary as gaily accepting and using them. In that chest the layette, carefully chosen by an aunt in Worcester and sent on, had been kept for months already, so eager had they been in preparation for the young Kansan's coming. The package had been stopped in Westport, as was the frequent custom, and then tied up clumsily and sent on by some humane looter with "Welcum little

Stranger," scrawled across it. Mary, delighted with the episode, had saved the wrapper to show her son when he was grown up "so he'll know how he came." All the laughter and the fervent talk that had gone on in this little room, the youthful—so youthful!—and partly sentimental reflection of Alcott and Emerson and Wendell Philips, mixed with as youthful gaiety and unashamed nonsense! The sweet nobleness of the boy who was gone—the waste of such gentleness and such fervor! Tears rolled down John Truman's face.

The bedroom door opened and Ellen came out softly and stood there closing it slowly with cautious avoidance of sound. John had never seen her so pale and worn and spiritless as she seemed in this thin candlelight. Her lips were closed straightly in a pathetic determination of self-control and her eyes were strained as if all day she had forced back tears. Her whole look had a pitifulness John could hardly bear. She made a sign of silence to him as he sprang up, and went on to the kitchen-door for a whispered conference with Mrs. Watson. Then she beckoned to him and led him outside. As he touched her she relaxed against him in his embrace as if willing for the time to give up all effort for herself.

"She will sleep for a while now. I can go home. Let's walk home," she added with a brisk characteristic return of energy. "It isn't too far."

"But dear, it is impossible! You are far too tired. You can't."

"Not that kind of tired. I am so tired in my heart and my head and that will rest them. And I must put something between that place and this place. I can't be back home all at once," she entreated, with a faint tremble in her voice.

John had never heard self-pity in Ellen's tone before. He kissed her tenderly, with an unsatisfied longing to give adequate comfort, but a feeling too that he was inappropriate to give comfort for this kind of weariness, he who allowed such heavy burdens to fall upon her.

"We'll walk as far as you like, dearest," he said humbly.

So they started across the prairie, John's horse nibbling

along behind, with a trailing bridle-rein. "Let's not talk yet," said Ellen. But presently she moved nearer and slipped her hand into his and they walked on like two children on some sad timid journey. Ellen moved along with her face to the horizon or the early stars and John could not restrain himself from turning frequent, searching, wistful glances upon her. He had never seen her like this. In the pale beginning moonlight she looked slender and young, but with none of the color or trick of eye or smile in which her youthfulness usually lay. She looked for once weary and all aching and almost childishly unexpectant of help or hope. John suffered as he looked.

At length Ellen turned a little to him and clasped his hand more warmly and drew it to her side.

"How sweet the grass feels under foot," she said. "I am glad we walked."

"I should have been here, Ellen," said John sorrowfully, taking his opportunity.

"You couldn't have helped," Ellen answered gently. "It would have been all just the same. If any happening had kept Philip from going to Lecompton that day it would all have been prevented. But it would have been only a happening because no one could possibly have foreseen this horrible thing."

They came to a little knoll which gave them a wider view of the moon-lighted prairie, with their own house dimly seen in the distance.

"Let's sit here a little," said Ellen. "It's early still and the house can't run away and Mrs. Laird has put the boys to bed. It seems to me I must stay away from any house for just a little recess."

John hobbled his horse and came eagerly to sit beside her. She leaned against him, relaxed and resting, and he bent to kiss her.

"Like lovers in the moonlight," he said.

"More than lovers," said Ellen gently. She put up her arm to draw his cheek down to hers again for a minute. "More than any can be who haven't known each other so long. And been through so much," she added.

Under her words and caress John felt humble and contrite. They sat looking out over the stretches before them, with the milky white mists dimming the hollows. The mists and the pale moonlight seemed to wrap them and everything else in a soft vagueness in which even grief or misunderstanding lost some of its sharpness.

"What about your trip?" asked Ellen presently. "You haven't told me."

"It was easy."

"Easy!" She thought of long hot or wet days in the saddle, of the hard camping, of poor food, haphazard and perhaps scanty—all this at the best of such an expedition. "What a toughened soldier you have become, John! Aren't you terribly tired with the riding and camping?" she added quickly, and very gently, lest he misunderstand her and find a sharp edge on her seemingly solicitous words.

"I mean that we were not attacked. And there are now forty more good men in the territory." He outlined the trip briefly and went on to half-amused praise of Colonel Jim Lane. "Even sleeping is more interesting when he is around," he said.

"He gives you livelier dreams?"

"Gives you something to go to sleep on and a livelier expectation on waking. That is one reason why men want to follow him."

"He and John Brown do not agree on principles," said Ellen tentatively, approaching the point which they both knew they had at the bottom of their minds.

John touched her hand again in light caress before he answered, "On principles but not entirely on policy. It would be hard to say that one is more devoted to the anti-slavery cause than the other. In these chaotic times it is hard to judge of men's policies."

Each was delicately trying to come near their point of difference. But John felt a timidity which arose from self-reproach that what he thought his line of duty left so heavy a burden constantly on Ellen; and Ellen in her present weariness had no heart for effort to approach definition of relation between them.

"How is Mary—really?" he asked presently, deep solicitude in his tone.

"Worthy of Philip and of the tragedy. Oh, John, that child! We know how often general principles and devotion go down before a personal loss. But that child lies there broken and robbed and suffering, and the same firm, sweet, absurd little enthusiast as ever. I have wanted to cry more over her courage than over her grief. All the time I have watched for it to break and let her down into undreamable depths of suffering. I have felt as if I were following along behind her ready for her to fall back on me when her strength faltered. And she has just kept going on from step to step without any help. It wasn't until this afternoon, when she knew it was the time—and that she absolutely couldn't have a glimpse of his face again. It was too cruel! And then—how absurdly homely we are about things! The sharpest point was when she found out somehow that the wrong clothes had been sent over—we hadn't understood. She could stand the pine box and the lumber wagon and the clumsy service—she said they belonged naturally and Philip would have liked it. But we somehow took a scarf that he hated and never would wear and she cried hard over that. She was trying to see him looking as he used to long ago. You know Philip was something of a dandy in his innocent way.—Oh, that darling boy!"

"She doesn't realize it yet," said John.

"She realizes the first terrible blow. But she doesn't realize that tomorrow and the next day and the next day and the next week and the next month, Philip will still be dead. When she is able to sit up he won't be there to celebrate it and when the baby first smiles he won't be there to see and when it first speaks he can't be proud with her—" Ellen's voice broke and stopped drearily.

"She doesn't realize yet," John repeated sadly.

"Yes, she does in a way," Ellen answered after a pause. "Those children have talked over everything in the world—we never realized how fully they were preparing themselves. Mary says, 'You know we talked a great deal about what might happen and we always agreed that we must

try to be ready so as not to grudge anything or be bitter when the time came, if it did. Philip talked a good deal about it to me because we both knew how much danger there always was.' And we were patronizing them and treating them playfully. They were realizing long ago what tragedy might be.

"Now she is lying there, faithfully doing every single thing Mrs. Watson tells her and working so hard to get well. And Mrs. Watson is fine. She is the best thing in the world for Mary because she takes her for granted and doesn't talk about her courage or call her a wonder or anything. You would think that any woman in the world would do just what Mary is doing—Leah Watson would!—and that will keep her up more than any praising. There is a tremendous lot of merit in knowing how to take people for granted," added Ellen in something of her old tone. "It doesn't have anything to say about works of supererogation."

"What do you think?" she went on in a minute. "Mrs. Miles—Lydia's mother—has sent word that she would come over to stay with Mary for a few days. Lydia came over to see—so wistful and tender and sweetly stern—I couldn't tell you!—and she and her mother are coming over to stay tomorrow. I don't think she ought to but of course she couldn't risk being left in their house alone, if her father goes away at all. And that will let Mrs. Watson go home after her hard week."

"And your hard week, Ellen."

Ellen was silent a moment. "It was harder than even Harvey's death, John. After all, that was in battle and he went out challenging it in a way, ignorant and boyish though he was about it. But this was so wanton, so wild, so brutal—if you had seen him as he was brought home, beaten and broken, lifted from the ditch! It seemed to be the very sum of all this fearful brutal war."

"You should never have seen it, Ellen," said John bitterly.

"It couldn't be helped. I as well as any one. You were needed where you were. It was right for you to be on that Nebraska expedition, if you could help any one. That

was different from going down to fight around Pottawotamie and add to the hatred that brings on these outrages."

"The only way we can stop them is by intimidating the doers of them!" said John sternly. "That is the only argument that can ever reach men like these. They come here for outrage—they don't take it up after they are here. I came back from Nebraska with the hope to take a peaceful way for a time or to fight only for necessary protection. And then I come upon this!" He sprang to his feet and stood, a tall figure of imprecation. "I could almost swear never to take rest or to have a moment of satisfaction except in punishment of these men, until Philip and all other innocent ones are atoned for. We have tried submission and waiting and with every moment of non-resistance we have been less of men! That noble boy!"

He strode a few feet away from her and then came back more controlled.

"Isn't there a broader manliness than what must maintain itself by mere unorganized fighting?" asked Ellen wearily.

It was her weariness that allowed her tired lips to say it, the sharpest thing that had ever been said between them. Then recognizing the seeming purport of her words she gathered definite purpose and went on. "One doubts even the manliness of that on seeing how virtue deteriorates in such fighting. A year ago the Free State record was clear of outrages or violence. Now look at it. Men are not merely defending themselves. We have guerillas too, as brutal as any on the other side, stealing and murdering, fighting just to fight. That is what this hit-and-miss fighting of John Brown's is bringing us to."

"John Brown is a great man, and a noble one," said John, answering temporarily a minor point of her statement, while he gathered feeling for broader reply.

"He was neither great nor noble at Dutch Henry's Crossing. Slavery is no greater evil than murder and butchery. We won't do much for the country if we take away slavery and put general cruelty and robbery in place of it."

"The whole story of Dutch Henry's Crossing has not yet been proved. But whatever that is, it is bitter, Ellen,

if you think I am taking part in such deeds," said John slowly.

"You, love!" Ellen turned back to him quickly and returned her hand to his grasp. "If all the world were doing it you would not be! Don't think I can ever make a mistake in you. But you are putting your goodness and honor as well as your courage on that side. They will profit by it more than if you were an out-and-out guerilla. And when it is all over—" Ellen at the darkest always accompanied every hypothesis with "When it is over,"—"you will be grouped with that side. Even now," she said reluctantly, "you have less association with men like Sam Wood and Hugh Fraser and Governor Robinson and those men—and they are the statesmen of the place, who are thinking above guerilla fighting. When it comes to making the state, it will not be John Browns that will make it." Ellen could not conceal sometimes a little hurt regret that John was not taking his place among the men who were to be, apparently, the directors of the territory, that he had treated so slightingly in the beginning the promise of future importance.

"I am losing standing?" he said a little ironically.

"Standing doesn't matter," answered Ellen impatiently. "But standing with all our belief and tradition and what has grown into us as our notions of right and even decency. It isn't just that it shocks me either. But I think it will put back our being a state that much longer. And it affects the kind of state we will be, if we are founded in this. Well—I try to go with you as far as I can, John."

"I am glad you talked, dear. An unspoken difference hurts more. But if you knew how the hellishness of this murder of Philip calls me to go out and punish these men! I can't bear it."

"Then you know how much control the men exercise who for the sake of the cause don't go."

"Ellen," said John gently, "I am tired of the life of these past weeks, short as they have been, and sick of riding and spying and threatening and fighting—sometimes. I am as sick of it as I would have been before we came out here, because I am still the same man. But so far as I now see

I am doing what it is necessary to do. It is clearer in my mind than when I first went out. If a different duty were substituted, Heaven knows how gladly I would accept it!—Are you rested, dear?"

He spoke with finality and Ellen rose to go. He caught his straying and nibbling horse and threw one stirrup across and placed Ellen in the saddle and walked beside her with his hand at the saddle back. But they said no more that night, not even with the goodnight in which they tried to meet across their separation of thought and feeling.

XXXIV

PHŒBE and Hardie came slowly up the hill again after a comforting supper from Mrs. Laird and some play with the boys. Hardie was as thoughtful as Phœbe was in trying to see that the gloom of such days as these should not rob the children of their right to good spirits and simple brightness about them. Now Phœbe had seen them cheerfully to bed with all the sympathetic excitement due to the novelty of making acquaintance with a strange bed, and with no omission of usual bedtime entertainment.

She and Hardie came wearily up the slope in the edge of the evening, courting a gentle relaxation after the hard barbarous sorrow of the last few days. Phœbe's step lagged and her head drooped a little from its usual light erectness. Hardie looked at her from time to time longingly, wishing for some way to lend a hand to her weariness. One never found means to help Phœbe except by assisting her in her service to someone else. She seemed to him always like some straight, slender, isolated young tree, offering shade or support or beauty, but taking nothing and needing nothing itself.

" 'Is she wronged? To the rescue of her honor, O my heart!' " Hardie had whispered to himself more than once. If for once he found her needy and he with strength or resource or spirit at any point greater than hers! In this hard summer he had ridden much abroad to places where he feared women or children had been left alone, to see what their want or their danger might be; many weak ones had brightened into confidence at sight of his keen compassionate face. But when had he found a want or a weakness in Phœbe?

At the house they found that John and Ellen had not yet returned. Hardie said, "Don't go inside yet," and himself went in to open every door and window and let

the fresh night air carry out all that had known the sickness and care-taking of the last few days. He brought out "the chair" and Phœbe laughed at an effort so out of proportion to her requirements, but sank gratefully into its grateful depths.

"Do you want to be alone?" he asked hesitatingly. It was a noble sacrifice he offered, since in the crowded and confused life of the house moments alone with Phœbe were rarer than feasts.

"Oh no—if I am not too wearing. You are so tired yourself and you have had such hard things. Bring yourself the next best chair."

So he brought one and a wrap and footstool for her. "You must feel worn all through," he said as he put it in place. Phœbe for once seemed to rest on his care-taking in a way to set him aching with gratification and with stirred feeling. She even let him gather her wrap about her and adjust her chair, smiling a little upon him, wearily, gently.

"I'm too tired to lift a finger," she explained. "I'm tired to the bottom of my heart—and it seems to be deeper than it ever was before." She closed her eyes as if to shut out what she could no longer bear. Pathos, appeal, in Phœbe were more unendurable to Hardie than the usual governed sweetness of her manner.

"Oh, don't!" he said helplessly. "Be—be rested!"

Phœbe opened her eyes and laughed a little. "I do seem to be entreating pity—making a pore mouth, Tom Selton calls it."

"Be sorry for yourself for once. Let yourself be as sad as you want to be. Let me do something for you," Hardie urged, almost boyishly clumsy.

She laughed again. "You are doing something in showing me how absurd I am." And above his "No!" she went on, "I am the one who has no troubles. I can't help suffering with all these troubles of others but I have none of my own, only the general anxiety. I know Mary doesn't want us to suffer so much for her."

"One must though. One can't see all this and not suffer."

"In the end I believe I won't—not nearly so much. I made myself think of it through the funeral and see it whole Look what she has. All her life is shaped about this one perfect beautiful thing. She had it for a year—love, perfect sweetness, perfect happiness. And it ended in a way to seal its perfection for all time. Nothing in this world can ever subtract an iota from what she has—she can never see Philip grow less beautiful or less heroic, or anything put a grain of modification into their relation. It is complete for all her life. And Mary has enough imagination and enough love to keep Philip at his highest, beside her. She will never lose that exquisiteness. And she has her boy."

Hardie wondered at the maturity of her words and the depth of her view of profit and loss in life. "I believe you are right. How can you be so far-sighted and imagine so deeply."

"Perhaps I don't. But I have learned more in the year I have been here than I ever knew before. You get at lives here so barely. I've never had a real trouble, since I've been old enough to realize fully, and I've never had a sharp sudden one. Nothing has ever come except what the week before or the month before led me to expect. I don't believe anyone has a right to such a life. I have learned more and felt more since I have been out here than I ever could from my life at home. I owe more to Kansas than anyone that has ever been here."

"With all that we have put upon you?"

"I don't know whether I can make you understand," said Phœbe slowly, showing no impatience with him. "We—my family—are like many New England people. We still seem very near to our Colonial grandfathers; we talk about them and keep their pictures on the walls and are proud of them—and so on. And in a way we have a kind of dignity and form of living that comes from our regard for them. But we let our very confidence in that and pride in it be sufficient for us. We don't undertake much for other people. If our grandfathers hadn't cared more than we do there wouldn't have been any Revolution. We are proud of our inheritance and we think a good deal about

it, but we don't think of paying any price for it. Of course we are mostly a family of women now and my father died when I was only a child. But there ought to be something for us. When I heard that cousin John had come out here I was so proud of him and I determined at least to see the chance he was having here, though I didn't dream that there would be anything for me to do in this place. It seemed so much like what John's grandfather or my great-grandfather would have done. I said first that I was coming to Cincinnati and when I got through the dispute over that and the objections and was all ready to start I began to mention Kansas. But they didn't seem to see so much difference between Ohio and Kansas as I feared they would. So I came."

Hardie had never heard Phœbe talk so freely or at such length. She was speaking quietly but at the end she raised her eyes and looked full at him as if what she had been saying was of import for him. He trembled between satisfaction in having her give him this degree of self-explanation and a desperate fear of not using it right.

"I couldn't go back when they wanted me to," said Phœbe, as if waiting for him to take a cue and giving him a second chance. "You know what it has meant to me."

"I know what you have meant to it. I could never have believed that a woman of your experience and your gentle protected life could have taken the place you have. Your courage and nobleness are beyond any knowledge I ever had. I could never have believed that there was one like you.— My best hopes never promised me such a one as you to love, when love was to be given to me." His tired face glowed entreatingly as he leaned toward her and his voice trembled a little.

Phœbe withdrew her glance and her face fell, less in denial than in disappointment, it seemed. Hardie waited a moment and then drew back.

"I should not disturb you when you are tired and distressed. But it is not new to you that I love you more longingly as time goes on. I can't conceal it. It is more than I can bear now to see you so tired and sad. No woman

should go through what you have these last few days."

Phœbe waited with troubled air, perhaps less unwilling than unable to answer.

"I know it is little to you that I love you," he said humbly. Humility found unaccustomed place in him, supplanting his usual keen air of humorous and satirical judgment.

Phœbe drew her dark wrap more closely about her throat and turned her face a little upward toward the misty moon. Her color had risen and her eyes were brighter and darker, with a feeling Hardie could not read. "No," she said at last, lifting herself more upright and speaking with an air of determining to meet an issue. "I care greatly. But it humbles me too much."

"Humbles you! Heavens! You are too generous to ridicule a man who cares so deeply, but you seem to take me very lightly," he added in hurt tone.

"No," said Phœbe gently. "You make me humble and embarrassed. You have a notion of women that would make any individual woman humble. And no woman in the world would honestly venture to try to live with it. Some women might take advantage of it but a good woman could not honestly accept it."

"My word!" cried Hardie settling back in his chair, humility giving way to amazed indignation as he realized that she meant the terms she was using. "Phœbe!" he said, leaning toward her again. "I worship the ground you walk on!"

Phœbe braced herself and seemed to say, "Once for all, this thing must be done and done completely." She sat upright and threw back her shawl.

"You have said so before and I think you believe it. And I told you I wouldn't be worshipped. A woman is not to be worshipped any more than a man is. I won't be set up on a pedestal or in a shrine or be knelt to or anything of the kind. I want credit for what human merit I have as any one does, and no more. If you can't love me for that you don't love me. But I refuse to be made ashamed by a holiness and glory I don't have!"

Hardie's lips retained a little curve of amusement amid

the general astonishment of his expression. "Is it such a demerit to admire your qualities so much?"

"But you admire qualities I don't have. You set up your notion of women and then mount me on the top of that."

"I never heard of a man so browbeaten for finding women—good women—fine and noble, as they are, and too fine for the maltreating of a world like this."

"But after all, you don't," said Phœbe with a startling reversal of attack. "You say we are wonderful and then think any exhibition of courage or usefulness in us is marvellous. You think that for us to take any real part in this work here is beyond expectation."

"If you have been storing up this thought of me all this time I don't wonder you have refused to listen to me. I seem to show myself a poor fellow. But not in lack of appreciation of you. I don't deny your courage or usefulness!—My heavens!—I only wonder at the degree of it. When I think of the demand made on you daily I nearly die—on you and Mrs. Truman! It is the bitterest thing to me in this whole affair."

"And when I see you called to be brave and strong I am proud of you—you men—so glorified I can hardly stand it. Do you see the difference? I would have come all the way out here just to feel such pride as I have felt."

"That is only another proof of the rareness I find in you. Phœbe, I can't deny this. This sort of belief is a part of my best feelings. I can't deny it even to make cause with you. It began with my mother. She suffered many things unfairly and it imbittered some of my boyhood years because I had to see it and not help it. I can't bear it that women should have so much of the hardness of life as they do. Look at this now—men get up a terrible thing like this and then poor Mary suffers!"

"Women have a perfect right to suffer and to be brave while they suffer—just as Mary is doing."

"Men have no right to make them."

"No, nor any one—but not merely because they are women."

Hardie smiled grimly. "It is rather ironical that you

can never tolerate me because my ideal of you is too high.''

''I don't think it is idealism so much as—fetichism, perhaps.''

Hardie rose impatiently and moved away a few steps to listen to some slight sound from the stables. Phœbe's look after him was wistful.

''After all, is there so much between us?'' he said coming back. ''Should it keep a woman from loving a man if he had any other merit? I never before heard of a lover who could win his beloved only by denying his high regard for her.''

''Perhaps,'' Phœbe hesitated a moment to smooth a little tremble out of her voice, ''I fear your high regard for us all might be at the expense of your individual opinion of me. I can't hope to transcend that by my own merit. I am submerged in my whole perfect class,'' she said with a little laugh.

''I find you always so far beyond mere perfection—'' he said bending over her.

''Oh!'' she cried drawing back. ''This is unendurable!''

He continued to bend over her. ''Phœbe, how near do you come to loving me?''

''Not at all, in language like that! You make me foolish. No woman is beyond perfection.''

''I may seem like a fool. And I know I am quite unworthy of you.''

''You're not!'' cried Phœbe. ''A good man is as good as a good woman. If men would only believe that it would be better for women. But if in a time of trouble instead of saying, 'Stand back—I'll protect you,'—when probably you couldn't do it anyway—you would say, 'Here, come and help'—it would be better.''

''It should be easy to do that. Do you make it a condition.''

''I'm not making conditions,'' she cried flushing. ''Anyway, it would have to be natural. And you could never say it unless it were spontaneous—and it is not.''

''No. I can't buy anything that way. Does this put me so far away—is it so obnoxious a thing in me?''

''No! It is lovable—it is sweet. But no woman can

take it, honestly, or be fair to you in accepting it. How could I risk all my life on such a misconception of me as that? And afterward there would be reconstruction. How could we live together without perfect honesty? I couldn't be sincere without saying this. I had to say it, to explain," she ended, with a note of something like entreaty in her voice.

"And now you have said it?" cried Hardie, leaning toward her again. "It is said."

"No." Phœbe put out her hand to motion him back. "It is the same. Mere saying does nothing. You must see more clearly even if less beautifully."

Lewis Hardie took the hand she held out and then sought and grasped the other and held them, looking at them. They were not the white soft young-lady hands she had brought from Massachusetts. They were brown on the backs and the palms bore little calloused places and her right forefinger had a dark stain and her thumb had recently worn a blister. Hardie looked at them carefully and turned them over and kissed the little abused spots on them, and this time Phœbe's withdrawal of them was not abrupt. He looked from them to her troubled face and she said sadly, "But you understand."

"No, I don't," he said, dropping her hands with a little sigh. "But not because you have not been painfully clear. I think I shall have to be a different man to see your distinction."

"Perhaps you will have to be less generous, less fine," said Phœbe, with a little wistfulness in her tone. "Don't you see," she added suddenly, "that a woman might in a moment of weakness take this generous idealism you offer, to rest on forever?" Hardie saved the words to think over afterwards, to see if any satisfaction of hope was to be obtained from them.

But a distant figure that had appeared in the moonlight proved to be John and Ellen and John's horse in close combination. There flashed over Phœbe's mind a thought of what would be Ellen's impatient amusement if she could have heard all this talk. Yet her conviction did not fade before this imagined satiric ridicule—any more

than it did under her own weariness on this sad evening.

They watched the approach of the Trumans silently until Hardie turned to say abruptly under his breath. "Then you will never love me because I love you too much?"

Phœbe shook her head impatiently to show that no more could be said, and then John and Ellen were within hearing. Ellen looked hopefully at the grouping of the two in the moonlight, but they showed no responding look to justify her hopes.

"Whatever is the matter with them? I think a little honest lovering would lighten up things for everybody," Ellen sighed.

But she also said to herself that the romance of mere initial love was a pale thing beside the intricacies and profundity of married love.

XXXV

TWO or three days later John Truman went over to Mary Livingstone's. Mary was progressing bravely, her various nurses said, and would soon be sitting up. Henry Watson had taken his wife home and she had gone reluctantly, but heaving a sigh of honest weariness and relief. Mrs. Miles had taken her place. Ellen who did not know her, had looked with a little solicitude on her installation. A nervous or over-sympathizing woman might so easily break down Mary's control by too much invitation to feeling. But Mrs. Miles entered calmly, looked over the practical ground and set steadily into the round of housekeeping and nursing "as natural as a slat-sunbonnet," Bob reported. One could not have guessed from watching her that she knew the depth of tragedy belonging to this house, or the state affairs which had brought it about.

But she showed professional skill in her use of the scanty resources of the cabin, and Mary and the baby prospered in her hands. Lydia came with her mother, and went home and came again with her father, and sat by Mary silently or sometimes with speech between them that no others heard. So good was the report from the cabin that John said he must go over to see if Mary wanted to talk about business matters. She would need someone to talk with when her mind turned to that, as of course it must in time.

"I won't force any questions on her," he said to Ellen, "but perhaps she is beginning to worry about her affairs and needs someone to help her, poor child."

His eyes dimmed for a moment as he came to Mary's bedside, and he almost missed the thin little hand which she so promptly held up to him. Her whiteness and tender frailness seemed to point the tragedy he thought he had already realized fully. Mrs. Miles had combed her hair

back tightly and tidily into a childish braid and left only a smooth brown rim about her face instead of the rippling frame he was accustomed to see. In her white face her eyes looked intensely, darkly blue, under brows that seemed to be slender black lines in contrast with her white forehead. No pallor or faintness belonged to her eyes. John felt as if he were looking at the bright glancing spots on dark blue water, so vivid and spirited and controlling were they.

She greeted John with simple pleasure, like the Mary of former days. "I hoped you would come to talk with me," she said. "I thought it was time my son was beginning to see some men, to see what he is to grow up to be."

"A better one than I, I hope," said John, smiling in friendly way at the indifferent infant beside her and stooping to praise him abundantly. Even at her weakest Mary would hardly let him go from the room.

"No, not better—but I want him to have all the kinds of goodness of all the best men. There are so many kinds and I want him to have them all. You see I'm already asking everything in the world for him. I want him to be a gifted man, of course, but I don't see that I can do anything about that. But he must be like Philip, only finer. I don't know how that can be but I know Philip would have wanted it. We used to talk about it, you know, and I said he was to be just like Philip, of course, and he said a man must always make his son better than himself. So I must try."

"If he is as noble as Philip," began John huskily. Then his voice broke and his eyes dimmed again and he stopped, condemning himself for his inability as a comforter.

"Yes," said Mary softly, "wasn't it wonderful?" She suddenly threw up her arm to cover her eyes and then turned and hid her face against the baby. But even before John had commanded his voice she recovered herself and went on. "The most of the time it helps, to think how fine he was. But sometimes it only makes it harder."

"Can I be of any help about your business affairs,

Mary?'' asked John, bringing himself to a practical tone. ''Is there anyone to write to? Does anyone in the East have them in charge?''

''Yes—,'' she gave a fairly distinct statement of her business affairs and Philip's, as Philip had carefully explained them to her. ''You see, we are not what you would call poor. That was one reason why we came out here. Even if we lost the money we used here we would have some left.'' John looked from the soft elegant bedding to the crude nursing makeshifts the prairie women had devised, and thought of the contrasting elements in her condition. ''Philip left his will at home with his grandfather's lawyer. If you would write to him.'' She gave the name with address and John took it down.

''Shall I ask him to see what arrangements he can make for bringing you home? We can plan with him from this end.''

''For bringing me home?'' asked Mary.

''Yes. Of course you will come and stay with us for the present, as soon as you are able. But you will want to make the trip before winter if you can.''

''But Mr. Truman! I'm not going home. Why should I go home?''

''You can't stay here alone, Mary.''

''No, of course. I've been thinking about it. I couldn't live out here in the cabin alone. But I can have a little house in the village as soon as I am able. I can have one built, can't I?—up a little way on the hill toward where Mrs. Robinson's was but not too far away from the others.''

''But Mary—'' John looked utter astonishment—and distress, picturing the unprotected girl and her baby in the midst of all this turmoil. ''It would be too hard for you —I don't think you realize.''

''It would be hard anywhere without Philip.''

''Yes. But I mean physically hard. For years this will be a rough country, terribly rough. After a while,'' he said gravely, thinking he saw a reason in her mind which she had not mentioned, ''when transportation is better we can have Philip's body sent back—''

''No, this was Philip's country even if he wasn't here

long. This was the only thing he did, you know, after he was grown up and made plans for his life—he was so very young, you see. This was his only real deed. So this was his place through and through. If he cared for his grave at all he would want it here. And I want him here."

"But your boy, Mary."

"That is just why I must stay. I want him to be here and to grow up here. I know it sounds silly when he is such a baby and will be for so long. But I want him to hear such talk as there is here from the very beginning and I want to point out the brave men that are here and tell what they have done. I couldn't find any other place like this."

"I should think you would hate the place, Mary," said John sadly, looking at the youthful face and slender length in the bed.

"I don't. I hate slavery a thousand times more than I ever did before. I hate it. And see what it makes men into—the brutal men that killed Philip so cruelly. They didn't even shoot him with a clean shot. But there are hundreds of men here as willing to give their lives against slavery as Philip was. They will make a great state. It can't help being. And I want Philip's boy to know about courage like that from the time he begins to see and hear anything. Of course there are brave men in New England too, and everywhere, but they can't show themselves as they do here. And anyway we came out here to stay and help make the country."

Her tone was final and John could find no argument with which to gainsay her. Nor could he smile at the disproportion of the purpose to the weak youthful voice that uttered it.

"Of course I can't do much," said Mary, evidently making plans as she talked, "but I'll have a house when I can get one, and I'll have a place for people to stay when they need it. And when people are hurt or sick I'll help to take care of them, the way Mrs. Truman does. And then," reverting to the main point, "Governor Robinson will pass and I'll tell little Philip all about him, and Sam Wood and I'll tell all about him and what he has done, and

Captain Walker and I'll tell how brave he is, and Mrs. Walker and all about her, and you, and how he is to grow up a good man like you—and Mrs. Hardie and Mrs. Truman and Mrs. Watson. I will hardly have time to tell all the stories. Don't you see?" she added with a little laugh. "Then he will understand more about his father too," she added softly.

"You are a brave girl," said John as Mrs. Miles opened the door to say that Mary must not talk any more. And he rode away, touched and aching and incredulous. "It can't be, of course," he said to himself.

But Ellen said when he told her, "Yes, of course. I thought she would be planning that."

A few days later Mary and her baby were brought to the Truman home to wait until she was strong enough to find and take the quarters she hoped to get in the village. Lydia said a reluctant goodbye and went off with her mother, carrying her white face and courageous look to another place where a woman needed care and comfort. Mary's goods were packed up in the village and her little cabin locked—and presently burned by some mirth-making Carolinians. Another of the tragedies of the time had reached a period.

XXXVI

THROUGH the summer Amos had come and gone in his silent solemn way, gentle and solicitous and faithful and a little absent-minded when present, but secretive and mysterious as to his absence. He would appear suddenly some morning, having come in the night and slept in the barn, and soberly help Bob about the place for a day or two, and then without a word vanish. They knew he was sometimes with Old John Brown fighting, sometimes helping to furnish escort for entering settlers, sometimes bringing supplies over the border. Why he was so silent about his performance no one could tell. Even John, with his own reserves, looked puzzled or amused or disturbed over Amos's mysteries and his diplomatic secrecy.

"He is a strange person to come out here to fight," said Hardie one night after Amos had quietly vanished to his hay-mow bed. "He still handles a gun as if it were a flail or a pitchfork—one of his friend Brown's favorite weapons, by the way. If men with Amos Wright's fanatical devotion had military sense too, I believe they might put this through in their own way."

"Yes," said Hugh Fraser, who had stopped as he rode past, "Doctor Robinson, for instance, could organize the Free State men here into effective fighting if he wished. He proved that in California. But he doesn't believe we could get more than a temporary good by fighting—"

"Besides being in jail at the moment," interpolated Hardie. "—and wants fighting only when necessary. And John Brown can draw many followers like Amos, but doesn't seem to organize for fighting that will do any final good."

John was absent and his friends in their talk forgot for the moment his occasional association with John Brown's military exploits. They were talking for the benefit of Judge Sayle and a friend of his, a visitor from New York

who was learning the country. Mrs. Sayle, after her brief wild experience of the country had taken her sister back east again. But the Judge, after seeing them off from St. Louis, had returned to Lawrence. Now he was acting as a guide to this newcomer and they had ridden out with Hardie to the Truman place.

"Then you think," said the stranger, "that the settlers have gained nothing by fighting?"

"Not by any aggressive fighting they have done. Sometimes they have fought for defense and they will likely have to again. But so far as we can see now, we'd be better off if men like John Brown had never struck the country."

There was a pause as if he had said a crucial thing which all knew might be bitterly challenged.

"That surprises me," said the visitor, obviously not so much surprised as desirous of hearing more discussion.

"Much remains to be determined by results," Hardie answered slowly. "In a new country we all have to be experimentalists. John Brown may still develop more power than he has yet shown and we may all be glad to follow him. He hasn't shown much organization as yet, though he is a busy old fighter himself. I think the kind of men the territory is made up of needs a different kind of leader though. John Brown convinces some men but not others. In fact many of us are dubious about his final purpose."

"If the country at large could learn all the truth about Kansas just now it might have important issue," said Judge Sayle's friend with obvious purpose of drawing out comment. He was a solid-looking bald man wearing very good clothes and an urban air at which the Judge, gradually becoming emancipated from metropolitan things, was lightly jeering. He asked innocent questions and listened shrewdly to the answers. He frankly wrote himself anti-slavery, but his mind on methods and issues no one knew. Many such men came out to look at the struggling territory —"They want to read the country like a morning paper," said Hardie—and Free State men spoke frankly and fully before them always, confident of the result of an open view.

"No honest northern man ever yet came out here and heard the whole story and went back wrong on the goose," Hardie had said once; and Stivers had added, "They can't to save their lives keep a pro-slavery governor here. They keep trying it but he always goes good on their hands."

Now Hardie answered the visitor, "Yes, but our cautious friends the Democratic party are not eager to have the whole country know all about us."

Judge Sayle laughed suddenly, with a challenging look at his friend. "Westover is that *rara avis,* an anti-slavery Democrat," he said.

"I wish his whole party were made up of him. He's entirely too *rara,*" said Fraser heartily.

"I wish they would all come out here and look things over," added Hardie.

"What would they find out—about John Brown, for instance? In the East his name is beginning to be identified with Kansas."

"He is a great man in his way and no one can tell what he may yet do. The border ruffians run from him like mice when he stirs out. But I think he is a dangerous man for Kansas because he is using it for a purpose in which we do not concur. We are trying to make a state, in the quickest and best way. He is apparently trying to start a war pivoted on Kansas. That is the way I figure him out after some talk with him. I may be wrong. But you see that fits in naturally with the talk of the A. A. S."

"He may not go so far as that," said Fraser slowly, "sometimes I think he is just fighting to be fighting. He brought a good deal of it on himself—and of course on other people. If it had not been for Dutch Henry's Crossing a lot of this would never have happened. But nobody can blame John Brown for anything that came before that, like the attack on Lawrence this summer. We'll never stand another attack on Lawrence without fighting, to the last point if necessary. But our plan is just to fight when necessary and the rest of the time keep busy getting the place settled and making a state." He finished with his jaw set squarely and his blue Celtic eyes announcing the same firmness.

"You Scotchmen sound reasonable," said Westover.

"So reasonable we're beyond reason," said Hardie.

"Peacefully following the plow or pen by day and peacefully sitting up with a gun at night," said Judge Sayle.

"There is one thing, however." Humor faded from Hardie's lean face and it took on grim hard lines. "No one need think that we are for one moment forgetting what we came out here for. We'll wait for it and work for it and fight for it, as much as we need. But before we're through we will be a state with a constitution forbidding slavery."

The stranger looked from his stern face to the suddenly inexorable lines of Fraser's and in that moment obtained a clearer view than he had yet had, in the sight of these men who passed in an instant, with perfect consistency, from moderate reasoning to inflexible militant purpose.

Fraser seemed to read his perception. "There are hundreds of men here," he said, with stronger flavor than usual in his accent, "who will give all their goods and their last drop of heart's blood to make Kansas a free state." He burred his words sonorously. Sayle hearing him saw a far background of Covenanters, and conventicles in mist-draped heather.

"I hope you will get it," said the stranger seriously.

"With as little damage as possible to the Democratic party," said his friend Sayle lightly.

Westover hesitated between frankness and the appearance of diplomacy. "Naturally," he said, choosing apparent stupidity as a middle ground.

"Before all this is settled your Democratic party will all be smashed to smithereens," said Sayle, reverting to serious political prophecy. But Westover, who seemed bent on obtaining opinions without giving any, did not take up his challenge. Instead he turned to Ellen, who had been in and out of the room several times during the talk and whom he seemed eager to know as a type of the women who came to Kansas as Free State settlers. And Ellen took entertainment out of introducing Phœbe also and seeing the inquiring visitor open surprised and admiring eyes upon her.

Out near the stables Amos Wright was standing alone in the open, his face turned toward the stars of the blue night sky. A strange mysticism grew in Amos daily. He rode fighting beside his leader, he hid skulking in dark ravines or among farm-sheds, he sought news or carried it, he went about his own chosen business, of which other men knew little, he passed futilely to and fro, some stern and intense but undefined purpose in his heart. These were his days. In his nights were the hours of mystic devotion, fed by the stars and the sky. For Amos there was no politics or statesmanship in his plans—only religion. He stood nightly as he stood now, borrowing the greatness of the stars in this new sky for his devotion and consecration. "The sword of the Lord, the sword of the Lord," he said, as he had done before. He saw it in his own hand and his leader's, and he took up his blanket and went to his rest.

It would have been hard in those days for Hardie or the observer Sayle or anyone else to tell a stranger briefly what was the state of affairs in the territory, so difficult and complicated had they become. There was the fighting tangle of pro-slavery and anti-slavery settlers; the frequent and constantly expected incursions from across the border and from the South; the complicated politics supporting the opposing claims of the two constitutions and two legislatures; and behind it all the machinations of a distant national government, striving to direct its indirection cannily, to combine constitutional behavior with its troth to slavery, and above all to tide over affairs until after the November elections without losing either northern or southern votes—a task for all the politicians of the party to set their wits to. In Kansas both sides constantly turned their eyes toward Washington, pro-slavery men for help and encouragement, tacit or open, Free State men for constructive justice. "If they will simply enforce the laws we can take care of the rest," said Free State men.

But interpretation of the law was left to men like Judge Lecompte or Judge McNair and execution of it to men like Donaldson and Jones, who found no crime in outrages of

border ruffians and vicious crimes in acts of defense or precaution of anti-slavery men. The administration of the territory had been moved over as far west as Lecompte, a few miles beyond Lawrence, where these men had their headquarters, and Governor Shannon as well. It brought a new center of malevolence thus near Lawrence. Looting, horse-stealing, burning, occasional murder, went on to the west of Lawrence as it had before to the southeast and up about Leavenworth. The little settlement was thus enclosed all around. Settlers of each party lived in terror.

But the Free State legislature convened. The "bogus" legislature, chosen under the bogus election of the year before, had been recognized by the national government, while the Free State assembly, which had met in Topeka in March and adjourned until July fourth, was forbidden to convene. For weeks before, Free State men had had their eyes on the day and the appointment. Would it assemble? Territorial officials, waiting always for overt act, asked the same. Would it assemble? Would it dare to give the challenge?

It did dare. Two companies of Free State militia assisted the daring and a large mass convention which met in Topeka the day before, sponsored it. From their prison, with no prospect of release before them, Doctor Robinson and the other political prisoners yet sent a letter urging the Free State body to act firmly and boldly. The little wooden town swarmed with men, alert, watchful, cautious. Hardie, Fraser, Stivers, were among them. The territorial officials were armed with enough proclamations to disperse a dozen meetings—the President's, the Governor's, the Acting-Governor's, and from Colonel Sumner himself one which might be called the enacting clause, sealed as it was with the visible presence of soldiers.

But at its appointed time the legislature met. It was not really surprised, though a little self-conscious, to find Colonel Sumner meeting with it. Outside the building his five companies of soldiers were stationed, their regular blue-uniformed ranks lined off clearly among the surrounding crowd. The presiding officer looked at Colonel Sumner's commanding figure, looked at the men before him, looked again, and pronounced the session open and directed the

acting clerk to call the roll. The first man did not respond, the second, the third. The room was full of silent men. A bare half-dozen responded to their names. The acting speaker rapped sharply. "The Seargent-at-arms will summon the absent members," he said. The Sergeant-at-arms rose. Men exchanged glances, a little sheepish, a little cautious. Colonel Sumners stood commandingly and the play stopped.

"Gentlemen," he said, "this is the most disagreeable duty of my whole life. My orders are to disperse this legislature, and I am here to tell you that it must not meet and to see it dispersed. God knows I have no partisan feelings in the matter, and I will have none so long as I hold my present position in Kansas. I have just returned from the border where I have been driving out bands of Missourians, and now I am ordered here to disperse you. This body cannot be permitted to meet."

He withdrew with dignity. Men quietly moved from their places in sign of acquiescence. "At least," said one man, "we've been disbanded by a gentleman and like gentlemen." The same lack of animosity in the crowd outside was shown in its three hearty cheers for Colonel Sumner as he rode away. But they were followed by three groans for Franklin Pierce, as hearty and unanimous.

Hardie and his friends rode back to Lawrence that night. "Another comedy of manners," said Hardie. "When the humors of history are set forth this should have prominent place."

"There is something respectable in having the Federal troops take a hand though," said Stivers. "In spite of the unfairness of the thing, it makes you feel that you are related to something solid in government. We don't get that feeling every day."

John was not in Topeka for that meeting. He was with John Brown's company, which marched up from Osawotamie to be ready to fight. They camped a few miles from Topeka the night before the meeting and then, finding there was to be no fighting and no need for their kind of services, marched back again.

But as the summer went on even humor of incongruity

was lost from it. Events were too grim and terrible for the strongest or the most generous to find lightness of view in them. The sickening unseemliness of Philip Livingstone's death was not unparalleled. There were other Marys, sometimes less heroic. The dreariest thing of all was that the Free State men reacted often in kind. Not all the murders were committed by border ruffians. Not all the houses burned belonged to Free State settlers. Not all the wagons piled with household goods were driven by pro-slavery looters.

Tom Selton had neglected his farming visibly through the summer, and yet his family were apparently living better than before. Ellen's Samaritan offices were less often called for and new furnishings appeared from time to time in the rough little cabin. Ellen noted Mrs. Selton's curiously confidential look when they were remarked on. When at last a good milk cow appeared among their few animals and Ellen congratulated them on it, she chanced to ask whence it came, meaning only the place of purchase. Mrs. Selton gave her again that furtive confidential look and whispered, "Down at Stewart's. Tom got it."

Then as Ellen comprehended and flushed in embarrassment and indignation, the woman asked slyly, "Where'd your new mare come from?"

Ellen flushed still more, and more indignantly, but answered in matter-of-fact tones that John had bought her from one of the new settlers that had just come in from Nebraska. She was rather worn-out and ill-fed, but John thought she would make a good horse.

Mrs. Selton continued to look at her with a sharp petty incredulity and then, with Ellen's unembarrassed lack of response, was suddenly convinced. "Why say, ain't you got anything?" she asked. "Your man's had lots o' chances."

Ellen came away in a fury, an anger for John and for the party, and a second indignation which doubtless fed the first, at John himself and his putting himself into a place to make such suppositions natural.

XXXVII

JOHN TRUMAN led Free State men in that hot midsummer battle over on the Wakarusa. For two or three days he had been quiet at home. Then came conference in Lawrence and riding abroad among other settlers. And after that one evening the cautious call in the dusk and the low colloquy with bearded and armed men, and the short troubled sleep and the silent departure from the house in midnight darkness. He did not know that Ellen, lying awake in anxious surmise, had heard his every movement and listened to his horse's departing hoof-beats and then had leaned over and kissed the print of his head in the pillow and kissed it again, desperately, and then had buried her face in it and imagined other gathering horses and the place of rendezvous and then—oh, what did the night hold?

This expedition was no raiding or mere chance fighting. It had very definite purpose—a small cannon, once Free State property and now used against them, was to be recovered, a nest of pro-slavery raiders and ruffians, a center of marauding for miles around, was to be broken up and the buildings razed. The region had suffered much from these, Lafe Crossley's men. Lawrence men who did not customarily go on such expeditions had eagerly joined this one. John's friends were conspicuous among them.

A solitary dark ride on the soft grass by trodden roads, the meeting of other men in the dull blackness and then other men and other men, their faces hidden save as they relapsed into restful smoking or flashed a match to keep watch on the time; a rendezvous at an unspeaking farmhouse among fifty stamping tossing horses and fifty low-spoken men.

The captain took tally of his men and seemed satisfied. "We think there can't be more than twenty-five or thirty of them. They've got a blockhouse but they can't sleep

there especially these hot nights. The cannon is outside, or was yesterday. We want to get there before they are up and we want to get there before they know it. We'll come in on both sides the place at once." He took half of the men and left the rest to John.

They galloped forward. The dawn was not far off. At Alison's farm, a half mile from the Wakarusa, they left all their horses under guard of half a dozen men and marched quickly forward over the level valley ground. There was little talking, but the men at John's right and behind him kept up intermittently a low-voiced recital of outrages committed by men who belonged to this center before them. There was nothing new in the gloomy type of these tales and they only dropped into the current of John Truman's mood, a mood which had never quite left him since, days before, he had first listened to the story of Philip Livingstone's death. Even his talk with Ellen had caused only a slight fluctuation in it.

In this battle before him he thought he saw accomplishment. It was a satisfaction to ride with Hardie and Fraser and Stivers, and with the sense of their cooperation; to all his deep friendliness this was a grateful thing. But the definition of purpose was a further and greater thing. This was to be a battle, if he could make it so, to terrify ruffians and spread peace in the valley. This Wakarusa nest was to be wiped out, root and branch.

The companies separated and went off at different angles. John with his men set off in an arc to the right. He was to bring them in to the west of the place—the half-dozen shacks and log block-house. The men went swishing through long coarse slough-grass, harshly dry at the tips and cutting at their faces. Sometimes a marshy place left water cheeping noisily in their cautious boots. They reached a bit of wild plum thicket, evidently fringing a slender ravine running down to the Wakarusa. John halted his men. He thought they were just on the edge of the settlement. They listened, trying to hear whether the other party was approaching opposite them. There were sounds but they could not recognize them. The east was showing a faint gray.

"Wait here," John whispered an order. "Come quietly when I whistle." They must be neither earlier nor later than the captain's signal.

He crept cautiously through the thicket, the rough thorns of the wild plum snagging sharply at him and breaking off crisply, and then slipped silently down the soft earth of the narrow gully and found one or two bushes to help him up the other side. Another thicket confronted him and he stopped, balancing himself at the edge of it, and listened again. The company approaching from the east had had a longer way to come than his. Even if this were the spot they might not yet be here. The brush was clear beneath, as if hogs ran through among it. John stooped but could see nothing beyond it, save a general dark mass. He began to worm his way through, dragging his rifle beside him and pausing often to listen. No sound told him anything, except the grunt of a wakeful neighboring hog. The thicket ended abruptly with a clear edge instead of feathering off. John lowered his head to escape a final drooping branch and looked up again as he emerged on all fours.

A pistol was against his face and a strong hand at the back of his neck.

"I knowd that wa'n't no razorback," said the drawling voice John had already learned to recognize as belonging to Buford's Carolina recruits.

The man gave a shrill whistle and John, still pressed down on his hands and knees, heard action break out about him on all sides. Behind him he heard his own men, mistaking the whistle for his, begin to make their way cautiously through the brush and slide down the ravine. A few rods before him doors slammed, voices rose, pelting steps sounded. John dashed to one side the pistol against his cheek and struggled to rise to his feet. The man whistled again while he grappled with him and another man was instantly beside him with his hands fiercely at John's throat. The sickening, paralyzing feeling of choking made him helpless for a moment and then he struck out furiously with both hands. Each man caught an arm and held it and then with one accord began to twist it painfully

at the elbow. The piece of bullying childish cruelty infuriated him even more than it pained. While he struggled the men heard the crackle of bushes behind them in the ravine, and each taking a shoulder suddenly ran him forward. The gray was growing paler and he could now see the group of wooden shacks with men, fifteen or twenty in all, emerging from them with guns in hand or rising from the open ground where they had slept.

"The gully's full of 'em!" shouted his captor. "Get ready!"

They reached the square log blockhouse, opened the door, threw John in with a push that sent him to his knees, fastened the door and left him. His rifle still lay in the brush but in their haste they had left his revolver on him. He rose and looked about, as well as he could. It was a low room with damp trampled earth floor and narrow loopholes on every side, now letting in the faintest streaks of light. He rushed from hole to hole. To the east also he could see a thicket of brush; to the north the dark level mass of high slough-grass showed no movement. His men were coming on with no supporting company!

Outside, the pro-slavery men were gathering in a body, irregular and shifting but well-armed. They looked in every direction but finally faced the west and after a moment's consultation fired a volley at the suspicious thicket. The Free State men, with no further order and no sight of their leader, had paused just below the top of the ravine to reconnoiter. The shots went over their heads.

"Let's charge them. They must have got Truman," said Bailey Tice. It happened that Hardie and Roger Stivers were in the other company.

"Wait," said Hugh Fraser. "We don't want to drive them to cover until we have to. Let's draw them this way. You shoot and you, Dave."

Two or three shots rang out, scattering futilely. "Now be ready," said Fraser. The pro-slavery men came forward a little, took counsel and fired again.

"Now!" The Lawrence men sprang up a step or two into the brush and fired toward where, through the thicket,

they could see the compact body of men. Two men fell. There was a shout of imprecation and the ruffians scattered their ranks a little. They hesitated. From the rear came a sound and a man looked behind him. "Holy Hell!" he cried. "They're all around! Run for the fort!"

They turned as one man and plunged toward the entrance. A volley from the east met them. Another man fell and one ran limping. The building protected them on the north. They reached the door and while one fumbled at the rude fastening others pounded frantically at him and at the door. Some turned deliberately and fired again and again. The Free State men had come into view and were running toward them. Suddenly they realized why the door held and grasping a log that lay beside them they jammed it with the strength of five or six men against the door. A wooden bar inside gave and the men tumbled in, desperate, panic-whipped, dragging two wounded men with them. They slammed the rude heavy door and half a dozen men fell against it, forcing the wooden slides into place.

John Truman, inside the log-house, had first watched the fight, going from loophole to loophole and straining his eyes to see through the dimness. Between views he looked about him. The place was not so empty as it had seemed. At one side lay a pile of hay for beds. Stacked in one corner were bottles, their contents evident, a cask which seemed to contain mere water, some loaves of dark bread already dry,—provisions for a siege. John looked further and darted toward two kegs at the side of the room—one held powder, the other shot! He looked about desperately for a dipper to fetch water to the powder—no utensil visible and the keg too heavy to lift!

With both hands he began to scoop the powder out, tossing double-handfuls upon the hay and letting it sift down through. Again and again he threw it out with his big hands, and then kicked at the hay, tossing it about. He heard the first man at the door, fumbling at the bolt on the outside. He sprang to the door and with desperate force drove into place one of the rude wooden bars. He

could not wait for more but while the men pounded he continued to scoop out the powder and at last lifted the keg and tossed the final scrapings over the hay. He dropped the keg into place and as the door opened sprang to the wall in the darkest corner and stood pressed close against it, his hand on his revolver.

But the terrified men, tumbling from the sunrise light into the dark enclosure, at first neither saw nor looked for him. They jammed the other bars into place and then looked at each other, scared, relieved. But after a long breath and ejaculations, they all ran to loopholes. John too dropped to his knees at the nearest chink, holding his revolver beside his cheek, but waiting with intense consciousness for a heavy hand at his throat again—or a bullet at his back. It was not for these men to hesitate at a shot from behind. He remembered Barber and Stone and Willis! He did not know that one of his two captors now lay on the ground outside and that the other was the man crumpled up there on the hay, his face in his hands.

It was now full daylight. Outside, the Free State men seemed to have disappeared. John knew they had not retreated, and presently from the nearest shanty there came a shot, from behind a large cottonwood another, from a load of hay a third. Through their chinks and loopholes the pro-slavery men answered, firing at blank barricades. If they gained anything they could not tell. An occasional shot entered a loophole or glanced at its edge. One struck three inches from John Truman's eyes. He smiled as he involuntarily drew back, wondering if Hardie's hand or Fraser's might have fired it. From time to time he himself shot, with careful futility. This absurd concealment could not last long at the most, but let it last while it could. He drew his hat down further over his eyes and occupied himself often with his cartridge belt. The man on each side of him was standing and out of range of his face. Every man was glued at a chink save one, who from time to time gave attention to the wounded men on the hay. But it could not last.

Lafe Crossley at one of the loopholes shouted into space. "What do you want? Say what you want!"

From a cabin came Fraser's voice, surprisingly near, "Our cannon and to burn your place down and you to leave the state."

"You want hell, don't you?" answered Crossley. "Come out and get it."

The others inside, from the security of their fort-walls laughed loudly and added jeering annotations and then sent a taunting volley of shots to show that they had the Free State men confined to cover. Under this preoccupation John ventured to look around to see more clearly the manner of his captors. Roughly-dressed, roughly-built, rough-voiced, bullying without real firmness, jeering without wit, profane from lack of words—the type had come to be well-known to him. "Seconds," Hardie had called them. "Buford and Atchison got them cheap out of the Lord's imperfect specimens." "Poor whites," Martin Laird and his wife had summed them up briefly after their short view of some, and scorned them with a class scorn in which principles and morality did not necessarily have any part. A prisoner looking at them knew that he had nothing to hope from them.

The intermittent fusillade went on. No Free State man had yet come into the open. One staggered from behind the corner of a cabin and dropped to one knee, but was quickly dragged back to cover by unseen hands. Once a bullet entered a loophole of the blockhouse and struck a man down. Another hit a whiskey bottle, causing both oaths and laughter.

A man left his post and went searching about the dim room. "Where's that damned powder?" he said. "I'm out."

"In that keg," answered another over his shoulder, "Can't you see?"

"See a keg but nothin' in it," growled the man going on, jiggling the water cask until he heard the sound of splashing and then looking further.

"Thar," a man pointed briefly, his thumb indicating the empty keg.

"I looked thar, I tell you. Thar ain't none."

Others, finally aroused, came to look. There was the

empty keg and no keg held powder. Several men gathered in the middle of the floor, angrily questioning, accusing. The attention of all came to the matter. One man after another shook his powder-flask and then went looking about the room.

Suddenly one pointed a hand at John Truman. "Who's that fellow?" he demanded. No one answered, but John knew that angry faces were turned in his direction. He looked at them over his shoulder as he knelt and said carelessly, "You'd ought to know me," coarsening his voice and speech. He rose to his feet and turned toward them, twisting his revolver easily as if making some adjustment in it. Only a part of the crowd were paying any attention and they seemed a little puzzled. "I come hyah last night," said John.

"Yes, last night," said a weak voice from the heap of hay. One of the wounded men there had opened his eyes and was looking at him. "That's the fellow Cummins got in the brush and we threw in here."

"Like hell we'd ought to know you," said another man pushing forward. He thrust an angular slant-jawed face up into John's. "You bet we know you, you black-spit Yankee! You're John Truman, that's who you are. I seen you down at Osawotamie. That's the kind you are, damn you!"

John drew his head back and up. "Well?" he said. He could not think it made any difference now what he said or did. A clean pistol shot was the best he had to hope for. The whole crowd was now gathered facing him.

"Well?" snarled the man, and emitted an oath, to which the others growled an echo. He shook a revolver in John's face. With a movement too deliberate to be misunderstood and to bring retaliation, John pushed his arm up. "What do you want?" he asked.

Two or three men leaped fiercely forward. The leader stopped them with a loud order. "Wait!" he cried. "Wait a minute. Where is that powder?" he demanded.

"What powder?" asked John, making the stereotyped answer of innocence, as Matt might have done.

"You know," pointing to the keg. "Where is it?"

"I stole no powder. I couldn't get it out of here anyway."

"That's a blasted dodge. Where's that powder?"

"If you had any powder it's here," said John angrily. "Look among yourselves for it."

The men did actually exchange looks with one another. The loss of powder was serious. Few of them were armed with rifles. A sharp fusillade peppered the walls outside for a moment.

"That's all the good it'll do 'em!" said the leader. "You can lay down if you're afraid." He turned back to John, hesitating obviously, not between justice and injustice but between different degrees of satisfaction in dealing with him. Truman had no illusion as he faced the men. The question of type of suffering was open, but not its degree or its finality. He could make a fight but no more.

A man at the north wall interrupted suddenly with an excited, "Come here! See here!"

Lafe Crossley looked and then with a short "Tie him up," turned away. Two men flung themselves upon John and wrenched away his revolver. Another produced a strap for his ankles and one a hard cutting rope for his wrists. They flung him roughly to one side with a movement that threw him heavily to the ground, and rushed to the north wall to look with the others.

The load of hay had been set on fire and was now beginning to blaze brightly at one end. It was to be expected that they would destroy property yet it would be foolish for the Free State men to burn their defences unless they were giving up and departing. "They're going away!" Truman heard, and though he had thought he had no expectations his heart grew colder. But immediately he heard "Look! Look!" and fresh, excited, furious ejaculations. The burning hay was moving toward the building, propelled by unseen hands behind it. It came on steadily, was crowded against the windward side of the building, and in a moment more the gray smoke began to seep through the cracks between the logs. The astonished men inside regarded it skeptically for a moment.

"They can't set it afire that a-way," they said. Some

who still had shots remaining, watched diligently for a chance at the men outside who had operated the device of the haywagon. The smoke came thicker and thicker, blown in by the wind, until eyes smarted and throats hurt in the close room.

"Them logs won't burn," said Lafe Crossley. A bit of red showed through a crack and then another and another, and a narrow tapering sheet of flame was blown through.

"We'll have to run for it," said the leader, while rough urgent voices agreed. "But don't waste too much time shooting until you get across the creek." They distributed what ammunition was left. John Truman was watching the red streaks interlining the black logs.

Several men were sliding the bars out of the wooden sockets.

"We'll just attend to you before we go," said the black slant-jawed man, turning to Truman.

John measured again those red streaks. He could let them dally with him until the red reached the hay—it meant only torture—and an end for him anyway. He had had no such purpose in mind when he threw the powder there. But was not this the chance he had wanted?—a clean sweep and a lesson to be learned through the length and breadth of the state. Border ruffians for once would know! Twenty men would all at once get their earnings.

Suddenly when he seemed to have determined he drew back from his purpose. A massacre like that! Sharpest vengeance could not crave it.

He struggled to a sitting position and raised his voice to be heard above the din, as some of the men came toward him. "The powder is scattered in that hay. You will get it in a minute."

A fearful, sick, maddened howl arose. Men flung themselves at the walls and doors, beating them, crying "Open! Open!" clutching fiercely at each other, begging. The rough bars stuck, in frenzied hands, while men over their shoulders watched the progress of creeping red streaks on the wall. The sight sickened John Truman more than the fate in store for himself did. Death itself seemed less horrible than such fear in man.

He wished to think of Ellen but in this ignoble riot he could not.

The door yielded at last and men burst, rather than ran, out. They left their wounded on the hay. The slant-jawed man was the last to go. As he waited a moment for the others to make way for him he reached over and without a word brought the butt of his gun down on John Truman's head. John fell to one side stunned. The door fell shut behind the slant-jawed man.

Outside, Free State men ranged at a little distance on each side of the doorway bided their purpose. They had had enough of killing and their cartridges were low. Two men they wanted now and no more, Lafe Crossley the nut-headed leader, and the dark slant-jawed Morse Taylor. Them they would have, alive if possible. So they watched for the men driven from the blockhouse.

Hardie and Fraser and some other men stayed from pursuit to wheel the cannon they had fought for away from its place near the fire. As they got it into motion they heard shouts from the fort, "Help! Help! For God's sake! Help!"

The shouts continued. They ran to the door. "It may be a trap," said Fraser, and they held their revolvers ready as they pushed the door open. The two wounded men had crawled from the hay and were dragging themselves painfully toward the door. "Help us out, for God's sake," they begged frantically gasping in the smoke. Mere splintered bones could never have given them the ghastly blue color they showed.

"Your friends seem to have left you to be called for," coughed one of the Free State men. "What's your hurry? It isn't very warm here yet."

"Quick, damn you! That hay's full of gunpowder!"

Without a word they picked them up, at head and feet, and carried them, the ruffians frantically crying, "Farther, farther!" as they offered to put them down.

"Pleasant arrangement your friends provided for you," said Hardie as they finally deposited them several rods away, in the shade of a tree.

"A damned Yank did it," snarled one of the men, furious with pain. "He's in there now, knocked in the head."

Hardie and Fraser looked at each other and tore back to the building, now blazing freely at one corner. One line of creeping red was only a few inches from the hay. In the dark corner they found a man bound and unconscious. Their eyes smarting and blinded with the smoke they snatched at him hurriedly, half dragging, half carrying, they slipping and stumbling in their haste, their eyes on that quickly travelling line of fire. It was not until they were many yards away and had put their burden down in a place of safety and taken many gasping breaths of exhaustion, that they stooped to straighten out the figure of the unconscious man and look in his face.

"Will ye look!" cried Hugh Fraser—his strongest expression—"It's John Truman!"

Hardie fell on his knees, his hands trembling as he undid rope and strap and felt for injury. It had happened that they, in the other company, had not yet missed John. And now—so near a call!

"The whole thing wouldn't be worth him!" he said.

"It will be a sore morning's work if Truman is hurt," said Fraser as he stooped to help him.

A moment later, as they were putting water to John's head, came a great accession to the slowly burning fire of the log-house and a roaring burst of suffocating smoke and flame from the cracks and open door. From across the creek men looked back on what they had escaped.

John Truman raised his eyelids, drooped them, raised them again and listened. "What was that?" he asked dully.

"It came near being your funeral pile, Samson," said Hardie, putting water from the creek to John's head. "But it isn't, thank God!"

XXXVIII

JOHN lay a day at the Alison farm, where the horses had been left. He was not injured, only dull and faint. He sent a careful note to Ellen by Hugh Fraser, who had gone back to reassure Jessie, but he wished to go home quite well when he went. Hardie stayed with him and took opportunity for reconnoitering. The cannon was on its way to Lawrence and Crossley and Taylor, under stern taciturn escort, were on the road eastward. They intended, Stivers said, to take them to the border and drop them into Missouri and see how far they had to fall—and tell them what would happen if they ever came back. "Of course they will," said Fraser skeptically. "There isn't much sense in that. But you can't kill a man in cold blood. Crossley may stay away awhile to mend his broken arm, but they'll be back sometime—if for nothing else but to see you, Truman."

Through the long hot afternoon John dozed and rested stupidly and put simple medicines on his bruised head. He seemed to need emotional rest even more than physical and he lay with his mind empty of thought. At night Hardie reappeared after one of his brief absences and they slept in a tent beside the house, where rude beds had held many a Free State man that summer. John slept well at last and wakened with a clear head when a loud "Halloo!" in the yard aroused him. "Halloo, Halloo!" was repeated, above the barking of the suspicious dogs. "Is John Truman here?"

John stumbled out instantly, Hardie beside him almost as quickly. "What do you want?"

A single horseman showed dimly in the thick night. "Amos Wright sent me," he said. "Is one of you Truman?"

His message was brief and urgent. Amos needed help. "He and a fellow named Miles was trying to get some

niggers up into Iowa. They had two of them in a wagon under some hay and they got up as fur as Grasshopper Falls and they was suspicioned and stopped. They've got them in a log stable up there and they say they're goin' to take them to Leavenworth. They think there's another wagon out with niggers and they want to get it and take 'em all to Leavenworth together."

"How did you know?"

The man hesitated a little. "Well, I was kind of with the crowd at first."

They easily guessed. More than once a pro-slavery man had sickened and drawn back from the operations of his political associates.

"It was all right as far as until they got the niggers away and took them off. But I'd as soon send a Yankee to hell as to Leavenworth."

"Haven't I seen you before?" asked Hardie, peering at the man through the darkness.

"Reckon. I've been round." He spoke to his horse and then drew rein again and gave careful directions for finding the place. Then he rode off in the dark, his conscience eased.

In three minutes Truman and Hardie were in their saddles. The place was twenty-five miles off, beyond the Kaw. They must go by Lawrence for the ferry. They took Hugh Fraser's place in their way and found Tom Ferguson staying the night with him. Both men joined them. In Lawrence John called out Roger Stivers and Mack Page and Williams, while Hardie went to rouse the ferry and to beg Mrs. Bowers, already astir in her boarding-house, for some food for them all. The sky to their right was beginning to lighten dully as they left the ferry and galloped off along the level north road.

It was a gray day. They passed through two light showers and found the banks of streams slippery as they made their way by fords. John found himself giving a little sigh of depression when the excitement of departure was past. Hardie rode beside him. "This accounts for Amos," Hardie said presently. "Amos!" he added with a half-amused note.

John had more than once suspected the reason for Amos's careful child-like secrecy of all summer. But he had hoped that Amos was only in the planning and that others more executive were carrying out the purposes. A good many negroes were scattered about the territory, generally hired out by Missouri owners, and it was hard for men who had operated in the Underground Road before coming out here, not to put a hand to assisting them out of the country.

At the place of the friendly Delaware, known to Lawrence as Well-Met, whose face they saw often in the village, they got rough food and cared for their horses. Then followed another ten long miles, while the day grew more and more sultry and soggy and the horses went heavily. Then at a farmhouse Stivers knew they stopped again. They were now approaching the place which the messenger had indicated. The farmer knew something of the proceedings and was eager to give information. He was a cautious sympathizer with the Free State side and one of Stivers's many friendly acquaintances. Men were out scouring the country for the other wagon, he said. Three times his place had been searched. They were holding Amos and Miles until they got the others so as to have them all at once and then—even these seasoned men refused to imagine. A Free State man had been scalped by a Leavenworth pro-slavery partisan last week—by a white man.

The Lawrence men thought of the gentle Amos and of Miles and pushed desperately on. The farmer had described the probable station to them fully. A little rude one-room house stood on the side of the hill, a roughly-fenced yard below it ran down to a muddy creek, a mere trickle, and on the nearer side a strip of timber, willows and cottonwoods, bordered the stream. The stable was but a cottonwood shack.

They hurried forward, finding no one in their path. It was as had been said. Through the settling mist they could see the stable and the little house, but no moving figures of men.

"Let me look," said Hardie. "I have a plan."

He handed his bridle to Fraser, made his way down the

bank and leaped the little stream. Then when they expected to see him creep forward cautiously, he climbed the bank and strode freely across to the stable. No one met him. He rounded the corner and came to an open doorway, facing the house. A man lay within on a pile of hay, his head on a coat that Hardie recognized as Amos's. No one else was in sight; there was no movement at the house.

He stooped to look carefully at the man and then drew back a step and shouted "Hello!"

The man sat up with a start, his hand going automatically to his gun. "What do you want?" he demanded.

Hardie was engaged in looking about inquiringly. "Where's the rest of them?" he asked.

"Who are you?" the man challenged him.

"Jabe Harris sent me along."

"Where's Jabe Harris?" said the man suspiciously.

"He got sick and had to go home. He said I'd find the rest of them here. I live down south of Easton. He stopped there last night. He was awful sick last night, pret' nigh had colery, we thought. He 'lowed I'd better come on up here."

The man seemed stupid and easily impressed. "Pshaw! Funny you didn't meet 'em. They've went to Leavenworth."

"Durn it!" said Hardie slackly, looking about him with purposeless curiosity. "My hoss had to go lame and I went back an' got another. I might a been here sooner. How long you say they been gone?"

"About an hour, I reckon."

"Well—if I don't catch 'em I can go home. Where do you strike the Easton road from here?"

"Two mile straight north. Then you get the trail from Grasshopper Falls to Easton."

"I dunno," said Hardie dubiously. "For two bits I'd go back home. They don' need any help with the Yanks, I reckon."

"They was eight or ten of 'em altogether. The rest went to Leavenworth with the niggers. Goin' to sell 'em down river as quick as they can. I reckon they don' need no help unless you want in on the fun. I was out all night

an' I 'lowed I didn't need more. They had a lot of fun with 'em before I left."

"How'd they take 'em—in their wagon?"

"No—took the wagon to take the niggers off."

"Was they walkin'?"

"Had 'em on the run when they left here. Had 'em on two ropes to Si Kinney's saddle-horn and had 'em on the run." The man chuckled.

Hardie sickened as he pictured the men, running, stumbling, dragging, jerked to their feet and running painfully again at the rope's end.

He seemed to hesitate. "Well—you s'pose I'd catch up?"

"Reckon—you might angle acrost to the Easton road." The man returned sleepily to his pillow of Amos's coat.

The Lawrence men moved cautiously down the stream until they found an open level crossing and then mounted again and took a northward trail. The mist lifted and a low red rim to the west under the dark sky promised another hour of light. Mack Page knew the country well from Grasshopper Falls east, he said. They could strike the Easton road about four miles to the east of Grasshopper Falls. Then they would either cut off the gang or be close on their trail.

The tired horses took the road gallantly. It was a trodden grass trail, easier than the muddy main road. The spirits of Stivers and Hardie rose as they neared action. Hugh Fraser was serious. He took every such expedition as a heavy mission—a duty, but no light or acceptable one.

"You don't seem to drink delight of battle with your peers," said Hardie.

"Peers—yes. If they were peers! But ruffians dragging men at ropes' ends! I'll never take pleasure in having fought them."

"I've been in the South," said Mack Page, who had in truth been everywhere, "and these men have about as much relation to decent southerners as a Patagonian has to you. The South is as pleased to get shut of them as we are displeased to have them. I blame the southerners for

getting these hell-sweepings to do their dirty work for them. But they wouldn't do it themselves."

"When war comes—if it does, as John Brown says," said Stivers, "it will be in a different color from this. We'll have men to fight, not border ruffians. And if they don't admit Kansas as the kind of state we want, it may come." Stivers rarely spoke with such plain seriousness.

But mostly the men rode silently, straining their far-sighted eyes toward the misty blue horizon where lay their hard duty. The low red light gave a strange vividness to the green rain-freshened grass all about them. Mysticism grew in John Truman, stressed weirdly by these frequent calls to warlike action. Now the blue twilight falling before him and this strange red light on the bright grass and the mission of life and death toward which he moved, wrought an absorption of mood, a welcoming of strangeness. The impression of yesterday was woven into it, the nearness of death and himself potentially the cause of death. Even the prospect of wild fighting just before him now hardly roused him.

At dark they reached the Easton road. It had rained harder here and the road was muddy. Hardie and Stivers got down to examine the ground. "Pounded up pretty well," they said. They lighted matches for closer inspection. "A dozen horses at once," they guessed. "No wagon tracks." There were no footprints visible. The men must have been taken up behind some horsemen.

"We've got to catch them before they get to Easton," said Stivers. Everyone knew the horrible story of Easton. The enemy would have reinforcements there. They galloped heavily on. From time to time a man dismounted and lighted precious matches to apply to the road. It grew darker and they had to go more cautiously in order to keep the way. At long intervals they passed a house or saw the light of one in the distance.

Hardie alighted once more to examine the road. "We've missed them," he said. The tracks were gone.

They rode slowly back, taking the grassy sides of the road. Occasional flashes of lightning in the north helped them. They all dismounted and led their horses, watching

their chance to see by the lightning, or lighting matches and examining the worked-up road. It was hard to tell whether there were more tracks than their own or not. At last Hardie said, "We've passed it. It was at this cottonwood I looked the last time and the tracks were here." Within that half-mile the men had turned off.

They turned back again, examining the muddy road once more, but now their own tracks obliterated all markings. To the north no sign of any sort was visible. To the south, half a mile away perhaps, a light shone dimly. "It's our only chance," said John. They left the road and went forward cautiously, leading their horses. Twenty rods from the light Hardie stopped them.

"Let me try my trick again. It worked the last time. You be ready for anything."

He crept forward, while the others waited in the concealing black darkness. Two small lighted windows guided him to the side of a little rough house, half of it in darkness. He cautiously avoided the streams of light and got a partial view of the interior. In a square kitchen-living room hazily lighted by sycamore-balls burning in a saucer of grease, half a dozen men were finishing a meal of cornbread and milk off the rough table, and preparing to rest. From outside Hardie could hear no sound. He ventured nearer. Amos and Miles were not in that crowded room. He speculated on the inner room. But while he looked the door of it opened and a woman's frightened face looked out for a minute and he thought he heard the voice of a child. That was not the prison. He drew back and waited a few minutes. The men were gradually settling to rest. Their movements were slack and wearied and they stretched themselves on the bare floor with roughly expressed satisfaction. Hardie caught some words—exclamations, fragments of sentences, nothing to tell him either plan or fact. But obviously they were all to rest there for the night.

Hardie withdrew from the window and stole around to the other side of the house. A square little building—granary, perhaps—showed an added blackness a few yards away from the house. Hardie skirted it softly. A stream

of dim light from the window opposite to the one he had been looking through showed its closed door with a thick bar across it, a man sitting on a small box in front of the door and another stretched on the ground a few feet away, wrapped in his blanket. He made out the figures dimly but unmistakably. The sky was clearing now a little and at intervals, as the clouds broke away, he made out also the shed-stables farther on.

He came back and walked noisily around to where the guards were, in front of the prison. The seated man sprang up, both hands on his gun.

"What d'ye want?" he demanded in heavy rasping tones.

"Is Si Kinney hyar?" asked Hardie, making his voice and pronunciation thick and slovenly.

"What's that to you?" demanded the man.

"Well, if he is, Jabe Harris sent me over. Jabe he got sick yesterday an' had to go home." Hardie recited his tale as before. "It wa'n't colery, just a sort o' bad colic, but he 'lowed he better go home. I'd a got hyar sooner if I hadn't lost sight o' you over hyar by Grasshopper Falls."

"Si Kinney's in the house there," said the man, easily receptive. "They was all up all night last night. I reckon they got their mouths all fixed for a good sleep tonight, so's to go on with the Yanks in the mornin'."

"What they goin' to do with 'em?"

"I dunno. Talked about different things. Tar an' cotton, mebbe."

"Got 'em in hyar?"

"Yeh. That's their bedroom."

"Asleep?"

"They'll do well if they sleep after what they got—damned nigger-lovers!"

Hardie brought his face to a wide crack in the wall and made pretence of trying to peer in. "Do you know who they are?" he asked, speaking distinctly, in his natural voice.

"No—think they come from Lawrence."

"Jabe said one of them was Amos Wright," Hardie

went on, speaking clearly into the crack. He thought he heard a movement within and a groan seemed to answer him.

"I dunno. Say, neighbor, was you in bed last night?"

"Yes. Why?"

"Well, I wasn't an' I ain't none too tickled about sittin' up again."

"Want me to take your place?"

"I'm tireder'n a dog."

"All right," said Hardie reluctantly. "What about that thar fellow?"

"He got to sleep fust. You can change off with him arter while. They cain't get out nohow. They're tied an' they ain't got no gun nor knife nor anythin'. They ain't very active right now anyhow. They ain't nobody goin' to come arter 'em tonight nohow. Nobody knows where they are. Si 'lows that anybody that's lookin' for 'em 'll head for Easton fust."

"What about the other wagon?"

"They've give it up. Got clear into Nebraska, damn 'em!"

"Well," said Hardie, "wait till I get my hoss an' put it up. Where d'you put your hosses?"

"They're loose in that yard. They ain't but one little shed."

"Mine's right quarrelsome," said Hardie dubiously. "But wait till I go an' get him. I want to feed him too. I'll look round and then I'll go an' get him. What'd you say your name was, stranger?"

"Luke Peacock."

Hardie went off toward the yards, to learn the geography of the place. One big gate opened the yard from the nearer side. He followed the fence around until he came to the shed-stable and then to another little gate beyond, which seemed to open into a field. He cautiously opened it wide and then came back through the nosing stamping horses, restless in a strange place.

"I found a sort o' corner where I can kind o' pen him in," he said. "He might raise ructions."

He went off again in the dark, to where the other men waited. Two men, it was agreed, should follow on be-

hind him. They—John and Stivers—should see that the horses left the yard and then be ready for any other action that arose. The others should hold the horses in readiness.

Hardie came tramping back and rounded the corner of the granary. "Here you are, sir," he said. "I'm good for half the night at least. You can get your snooze out. What'll I do if any Yanks come round?"

"They won't," said the man, rising and stretching himself wearily. "They'll be nosing round Easton or Grasshopper Falls if they're hunting at all. I don't want Si Kinney to see me in there," he said turning from the house. "The dry side of a haystack for me."

Hardie waited until his steps and the last rustle from the hay had ceased and then waited awhile longer. Then he rose and stretched himself and studied the sky and sauntered idly about as if to keep himself awake. "A play with no audience, I hope," he thought. The course of his idling at last brought him around to the farther side of the granary and he stood and studied its wall for a time and then stooped to a crack in it.

"Amos," he whispered. A faint voice answered.

"Can you move?"

"A little."

"Can you get this knife and cut your ropes?" He searched for a wider crack and pushed the handle of his knife through it and held it until he felt it taken from his fingers. Then he sauntered back and seated himself at the door again. The sky was growing clearer. At ten o'clock the moon would begin to rise. He heard a little quiet movement among the horses and knew that one by one they were being gently coaxed to the little gate. When the yard was clear it would be time to move. He tested the bar at the door and placed it just ready to slip out of place.

The house-door opened up a stream of pale light and a man with broad solid figure and good bearing stepped out on the ground. He stood awhile looking about and then came toward Hardie.

"All quiet?" he asked.

"Yep," said Hardie. This must be Si Kinney, he thought.

"Not even praying?" satirically.

"No."

"Damn these nigger-suckers! This spree's a heap more trouble than it's all wuth. How are the horses?" he asked in a different manner.

"Quiet enough."

"What's your name?" the man suddenly peered at Hardie suspiciously.

"Bill Hoopes."

"I ain't seen you before. What you doin' here?"

"Luke Peacock was nigh tuckered out an' he got me to take a shift for him. He'll come on again arter while. He's over there under that haystack."

Kinney merely grunted and said again, "I ain't seen you before."

Hardie recited his tale a third time, beginning glibly with "Jabe Harris sent me along," and adding more details than before. The man only grunted again, seeming convinced, and looked about once more surveying his territory. He was turning back to the house and Hardie was relaxing a little from his alertness when Kinney suddenly said, "I cain't see no horses over there," looked again and walked toward the yards.

Hardie noiselessly slid the wooden bar out of place and pushed the door open.

"Come out," he whispered. The men dragged themselves out, stumbling and trembling. "Go that way as fast as you can," he said. "They're waiting for you."

He shut the door and barred it again. He could not go with them, shaken and weak though they were, for a sound came from the stable-yard and the man on the ground at the same time began to stir a little.

Si Kinney had come to the yard fence and looked. He was wheeling about again with a shout when from each side Truman and Stivers grasped him, and Stivers put a hand over his mouth. "Shut up!" he said.

The man tossed and wrenched at his great arms and roared chokingly behind Stivers' muffling hand. With a

furious pull he jerked himself backward but John's revolver replaced Stivers's hand against his face. "Quiet!" John snapped under his breath, just as Hardie came up. "Get a gag," he whispered fiercely to him. Kinney remained quiet for a moment, gathering his strength. Then with one tremendous strain he flung his right arm upward and struck the revolver and began a loud "Hel—"

The revolver went off with the impact of his blow and he did not finish.

They felt the big body go limp in their arms and let it sink slowly to the ground. A figure rose before the lighted window of the house and another sprang to the door. The Lawrence men turned and ran, overtaking the dragging steps of Amos and Miles and helping them along. Fraser ran to meet them and they almost carried the men for the last few yards and lifted them behind the saddles of the men already mounted. All on horseback, they waited a moment, straining their ears. At the house were shoutings, shots, running feet, an angry bewildered hubbub in the night.

"Come on, before they quit yelling and begin to listen," said Hardie. At the same time he pointed to the first narrow segment of the moon showing above the distant rise of ground to the east. They had many minutes in their favor, while the surprised men behind them ran and shouted and swore and discovered their dead leader lying on the ground and then found the empty prison-room and last the empty stableyard. It would be many minutes more before they collected the scattered horses, if indeed they could get them all. In the meantime the moon would rise and the last cloud disappear.

Mack Page's travel knowledge stood them well. They cut off below Grasshopper Falls—"No use in saddling our troubles on them," said Fraser, though Grasshopper Falls was mainly a Free State settlement—and took the road to the south. Their horses were completely tired and they must rest them. They would gain nothing by wearing them out. Amos and Miles, utterly speechless with weariness and soreness, could scarcely keep their seats.

At the friendly farmhouse of the morning they rested

four hours, the rescued men were rubbed with homemade ointment and put on fresh straw-filled beds, and the farmer's wife rose to make hot roast-grain coffee for them all. There was still no sign of pursuit. The settler watched while they all slept.

Between four and five they moved on again and at late breakfast time were begging Well-Met and his Indians for food once more and a place to rest for some hours out of reach of passing eyes. The Indians, always anti-slavery when they showed partisanship, grinned and nodded sympathy and rubbed down the horses and even went out from time to time reconnoitering, while the men slept again and waited for night and for strength for Amos and Miles.

"I was not the one for that," said Amos pathetically, as John came to see how nearly comfortable he had been made.

"You took the chances of the time, like the rest of us," John answered cheerfully.

The next morning early they were calling the ferry across from Lawrence and thinking of their homes and real rest and food.

XXXIX

ELLEN whisked the bruised and stiffened Amos into bed almost at sight of him and fed him with hot milk and more precious drinks and set Martin Laird to rub his hurts with liniments, while she tried to bring him out of his hurt of spirit by her ready naturalness of words. Then she flew back to give John the greeting she had not had time for at the first moment.

"Ellen!" he cried. "Were you safe?"

"John," she answered, "are you safe?"

Ellen's face looked thin and worn and her eyes held a look that begged for rest from anxiety. She had known how the Wakarusa expedition ended, but for three days and nights she had not known where John was. She clung to him now in a sort of desperation, as if asking him to give her hope for rest from this care. The blithe spirit with which she had met danger in the first months was sometimes overstrained now, in spite of all her efforts. These last days had been the worst of all she had known. Never before had she longed so desperately for John's presence and for what assurance lay in his strength. To face danger with him just once would be something. All her worst moments she had met alone.

These weeks were the most terrible Kansas had yet seen —the fearful three weeks of Woodson's rule, to be remembered to the end of life by those who went through them. Governor Shannon had at last wearied of working under an unsympathetic national government and had resigned, finding himself too honest a man for the place. Like Reeder, his predecessor, he had had to slip from the territory in the night. It was then that Kansas was first given its title as the "graveyard of governors."

"Not graveyard," John Truman said on hearing it, "the place where territorial governors are turned into citizens."

The new governor was appointed but had not yet arrived and no one knew what manner of man he was. That the government had appointed him was the worst that was known of him, but to discouraged Free State men that seemed enough. Pending his arrival Secretary Daniel Woodson was acting governor and for more than a week now—through all the time of John's absence and more—had been conducting an administration at Lecompton that fully satisfied Atchison and Stringfellow and their tool Jones. It was the darkest hour the territory had yet seen.

Atchison's "militia" many hundred strong, had moved across the border as soon as Woodson came to the governor's chair, and gone south toward the Marais des Cygnes. Three or four hundred of them had marched one early morning upon the little Free State town of Osawotamie. At one side of it Old John Brown's fifty men drew the attack to themselves as long as possible. But they were outnumbered eight to one, and could only lead the Missourians aside for a moment and then escape across the Marais des Cygnes—those that lived to go—and from their hiding see the whole place reduced to ashes and the settlers, women and children among them, driven out to scatter homeless. But Old John Brown, fighting in his linen duster and, from the middle of the stream with his garment floating out on the water, still defying the swarming ruffians, earned a new title for himself that day. Osawotamie Brown was even more terrifying than Old John Brown, whose name alone had sometimes sent groups of marauders flying.

The Osawotamie outrage only marked the rising confidence in attack which had sudden acceleration under Woodson's fostering hands. The remnant of fairness and the semblance of law that Shannon had managed to maintain was tossed away and Woodson proclaimed the territory in a state of rebellion. He had called for Federal troops from the fort at Leavenworth and only General Smith's better sense of military duty and right kept Woodson from turning even the soldiers against the Free State settlers. The Titus marauders were set loose and went about the country with a sort of view-halloo, as if spiritedly taking

the field for days of hunting. In this week past half a dozen houses in the region between Lecompton and Lawrence had been burned.

Constant news of this Ellen had been enduring in John's absence. Last night ten persons had slept at the Truman house and the last one had just gone to seek shelter with friends farther on when John and Amos came. The family of George Fisher, who had been shot down in the road without a word, was among them, a mother and two children, one a boy of fifteen babbling almost deliriously of revenge.

No one knew when more sufferers might come. No one knew when this place also would be attacked. The night before Ellen had slept not at all. She heard from the other rooms too many long-drawn controlled breaths, too many weary sighs, too many mothers attending children whose fear pursued them into their dreams. Sometimes she was desperately tired of this little house, where life went on so compactly, at such close range, and longed for the privacy and quiet of the solidly separated rooms of her spacious New England home.

But she had risen with fiercely determined cheer and confidence and managed a breakfast for all from her now slender stores and seen her enforced guests off to other refuges with a special service or gift for each troubled mother and firm assurance of her hope in the new governor, who must be coming immediately. She and Phœbe had just finished folding away the last pallet from the floors when John brought Amos to the door.

But after her first inquiry for John's safety her next word to answer his questioning eye was reassuring, "I'm so glad you brought them back safely." And to his suffering, "Oh, Ellen, what have you been through!" she answered only, "Of course you had to go after Amos."

"Amos is all explained," said John presently. "I suspected all the time that he was working on this, but I didn't know how deeply. They have had the thing organized on a complete scale and Amos was a sort of secretary for it all. He had a list of all slaves in the state and they were going to work systematically to get them out a few at a time. Some are gone already. It's hard for

men like Amos who worked in the Underground before they came here to keep their hands off negroes they see right before them. But Amos—"

"Poor soul!"

"Don't let anyone talk to him about it much. You can see he is terribly mortified and disappointed, besides his distress at taking us all out after him. And any one might have had the same luck they had. The brutal ignominious treatment he received is something for a decent man to remember a long time."

"Bless his old fighting dove heart! Phœbe and I will make him think he's a martyr and has done greatness. He worships Phœbe and she'll cheer him up. I'm glad he hasn't done anything worse than this."

But in spite of her words and spirit the household was almost beyond Ellen's management in these days, when Amos lay patiently begging back his strength and Mary was learning the care of her infant son amid all the distressing confusion and broken hours of the house, and sad or furious neighbors came and went with tales of fear or anger. Ellen longed for the substantial help of an Ann Martin. If she could but have a respite—if but a clear day—even an empty hour—what a rest to her spirits and hands! But no wishing or wearying brought relaxation or any morning to which she did not rise with a new forcible bracing of her strength and spirits.

John went into Lawrence that evening to consult with what men were left there, and the next day a committee of them rode to Lecompton to make protest to Woodson in person. They came back in silent fury at the insults they had received. For God-fearing and law-desiring citizens to be called cut-throats and blackmailers and ruffians was hard to endure, even at the mouth of a representative of the national government.

The next day Ellen watched John, at once tender and impatient with his restless perplexity. But in truth John Truman was not alone in this—no man was other than perplexed in those days. Hardie and Fraser talked

pointedly when they stopped at the house that night. Someone had spoken of an expedition to go out seeking reprisal for Reid's depredations.

"They'd better stay at home," said Fraser sharply. "Nothing is gained by this through-other fighting. Let men organize for the defense of their homes and that will be enough."

"It wasn't enough for Osawotamie," said John quietly. He knew that Fraser had purpose in directing his words to him.

"I know, man. But that was not the beginning of trouble at Osawotamie. Dutch Henry's Crossing came long before Osawotamie."

"It was not enough for Lawrence last spring."

"It might have been. But half the men were gone and the rest had agreed not to fight. We'll never do that again. That's another reason for organizing around our own homes. We lose ground every time we attack."

"Did we lose at the Wakarusa the other day?"

"I couldn't say that. We went out to get our cannon and we got it. Besides that they were right in our territory and we were protecting ourselves. That's just what I'm saying."

"What we need at Lawrence," said John slowly, "is one leader that everyone will fall in under and one that knows how to fight."

"The trouble is," said Hardie, "we have so many leaders that there are no followers."

"That is why we need one," John persisted doggedly. He wished to bring the others to say what was in his own mind.

But Fraser answered with some sharpness, "I suppose you know the one."

Hardie was giving but half attention to the argument. The day had lacked an element of satisfaction for him. He rose now with pretense of going to Amos, but after a glance into his room went on to the kitchen, where Phœbe was doing some late invalid cooking.

"Look at it," said John. "Walker has one lot of men

and Lane has another and Abbott has another and Brown has his. But nobody plans for all."

"I know it. It is pure foolish. But time is the thing that is fighting most for us, even now. The new governor will never do what that scalawag Woodson is doing. Anyway even he is a coward at the bottom and he will always call in the Federal troops in the end. You will see that. And that will be the best thing for us at the last."

Truman was silent. Ellen had come to sit beside him—seeing the kitchen occupied—and he put his arm about her shoulders and allowed the usually quiet Scotchman to talk, doubting not that Fraser had a purpose.

"A few months more will put us past the worst of this, I am sure. Every month brings more Free State settlers. And the slavery men will never come here to live until they get their constitution through. We're bound to win, man, in our own way at the last. It's hard, hard on the women and children though." He dropped his voice and burred his r's more than usual on his "hard, hard."

John tightened his arm on Ellen's shoulders. She said seriously, "They won't regret it when it is over, Mr. Fraser."

They all thought of rosy Scotch-tongued Jessie Fraser, who since she came out in the spring had seemed to keep a quiet little light-house for trouble-driven souls. She always said little and it was hard to tell just where she helped, but Ellen said it was steadying to look at her rosy cheeks and Covenanter blue eyes when the world was going round and round.

"Well," said Fraser rising. "The Scot seems born to it. Our forbears had it, and the thumbscrew and the boot thrown in. My wife's great-great-grandmother was drowned at the stake when the tide came in, and I've never but once tried to send Jessie back east. Are you riding with me, Hardie?" He raised his voice a little to reach the kitchen.

Hardie came strolling back, not knowing whether he was pleased or annoyed to be interrupted. Phœbe's statement of barrier between them had only fixed his dissatis-

faction more persistently in mind. "If I could only see the thing I would go at it, lance in rest. But how set about removing a thing that I can't even recognize?"

Yet whenever he returned from any danger, he came back always with a longing for the mere sight of Phœbe, for a reminder of the world of gentleness and sweet living to which she still seemed to belong as she went steadily and bravely about the strange duties of this world she had come to live in—no, not for any reminder of anything, just for Phœbe herself. Even to see her after such an "ironmongering" trip as this, was like a drink of cool sweet water, like the fresh touch of a white rose pressed to his cheek—oh, once for all, like heaven! "I'm a good deal of a Celt after all generations in and out—and a good deal of a lover, I believe, if I only had the chance!" He indulged himself on a ride like this last one—most of all on such a ride—with turning over words that might be said, that would say themselves if they had once a chance. He believed he would be good at love-making if one would only listen to him. Yesterday he had come in with John and Amos, with eyes only for Phœbe, and had seen the undoubted look of relief and satisfaction on her face at sight of him. But he had yet had no minute with her.

Now he had sauntered into the kitchen and watched her firm brown fingers busy with spoon and bowl stirring up some late nourishment for Amos.

"He's getting along, isn't he?"

"Yes—poor lamb!"

Hardie laughed. "He has been figuring as a wolf lately," he said. "Amos out on such a mission is like a mourning dove among blowing adders."

"It was a hard trip for you," said Phœbe. She lifted her dark gray eyes with sympathetic approval.

Hardie met the look with a sharp in-drawn breath. Phœbe could not guess, he knew, that even a man without self-praise or self-pity—and he was not entirely without either—loved to have a woman say to him kindly, if not tenderly, "It was hard and I am sorry and you did greatly." All that she seemed to say. His blue eyes glowed upon her and his lids drew to their narrow outer

angle. She would not look down, but she raised her hand to flick an imaginary gnat from before her eyes. Across the back of her fingers a straight red mark showed angrily, where a hot oven door had left its hurt. Hardie forgot himself and caught at her hand in furious pity. "Oh, Phœbe!" he cried.

Phœbe snatched her hand away. "You go out and risk your life for days," she flared out at him, "and you and everybody else take it for granted. And then you come and make a fuss over a little burn on my fingers!"

"I can't help it," he was answering, when Bob pushed the door open to bring in a hatful of eggs from a "hid-out" nest, as pleased as if he were rescuing a home from border ruffians. Bob took all his pleasures in life from small practical triumphs. Phœbe turned to him with exaggerated praise, under which he grinned beamingly, and at the same moment Hugh Fraser called out to ask Hardie if he were going on with him.

"If Mrs. Truman really had the hospitality for which she has a reputation," said Hardie coming in, "she would offer me her spare bed-room tonight."

"The only unoccupied level space is the top of the kitchen stove." Ellen rarely failed to smile back at Hardie, thinking that he got fewer smiles than he deserved. "Try it once and see if you are a changeling."

He felt a faint gleam of satisfaction as he rode away, in Phœbe's sudden flare of feeling and momentary loss of control. Did he think wrongly of women, he asked himself—and hotly answered no. If his lady could but understand him! It was grotesque, in these tragic times, to be splitting sentimental hairs. It was a strange contradiction that what he called reverence she called humiliation; it would be a sweet contradiction if a golden thread could be woven through this black mass in which they were living!

John Truman had let the argument end without saying all that was in his mind. It was not yet ready to say. But a plan was forming in his thoughts. When the next noon Miles came creeping along on an old horse, the best he

could take from the village—Leavenworth men now had his and Amos's—a natural way seemed to open before him. Ellen was the first to cry to Miles, "But you can't go all the way alone," and to turn to John for support.

"I must take what comes," said Miles. But John was soon riding off again with him to the southeast.

"I may not be back tonight," he said, with a glance at Miles's ramshackle mount.

"No," said Ellen, "and they may need you there tonight."

He turned a look of sore reluctance at her and the place. He had never hated so to go. "Go on," said Ellen easily. "Lewis Hardie will come out here." But to herself she said, "It isn't fair, it isn't fair."

They looked after him as he rode away. "Am I too proud? But he has to find out for himself. I can't tell him."

But John left Miles at his home, where a young settler and his wife had joined forces with the Miles family by building another room to the cottage and moving all their possessions into it, and rode on. There were still some hours of daylight left.

XL

JOHN Truman's mind was fully made up now. He was going to find John Brown and urge him to come to Lawrence with what men he had and to raise a force there, combining with it the companies already formed, such as could meet at once the whole body of slavery "militia." If all fighting men were once together, armed and organized and commanded, no slavery mob could stand against them. "I can't fight under any man," John Brown had said. But why shouldn't all men fight under him? Osawotamie had proved his power, so far as it had still needed proving. To John Truman no such proof had been necessary. It would take persuasion, diplomacy, to bring this coalition about. But he now saw his mission. One who had been as near as he had been to the gaunt terrible chieftain, was the one to undertake it. It was with something of the satisfaction that goes with clearness of view that he set forth on his purpose.

Yet he had also to send himself sternly on his mission. Ever since that moment a week ago when he had held the death of twenty men ready in his hand and then refused to order it, and that other moment later when he had felt the soft surface of a man's face under his revolver, and then had felt the man's big body grow limp and slack in his arms, he had experienced a recoil from the process of death and death-giving that made him hate more than ever all this horrible life. He might have killed a man before that—when men fell in the skirmishes he had taken part in, it was hard to tell whose bullet had effected it. Certainly he had stood with gun in hand and threatened men with death. But this thing—his muscles and his mind had alike revolted from it.

Yet this must be his sacrifice. He saw no relief from

the necessity for further war, and perhaps still fiercer war. He had come back with Amos hoping for an hour of quiet—and what had he found? If John Brown, with the terror already attaching to his name, would take on new and organized forces—if the new governor on entering found an orderly and reasonable yet forcible body of fighting men—what hope there might be for ending war! In spite of all he believed John Brown was the man to use.

At a turn where the road bent down toward a ford, stood a small cabin marking a claim, an empty, hay-covered shed beyond it. A young man stood idle by the road in front of it. To John's close inquiring look he returned a solid unflinching stare, not so much belligerent as stolidly expectant of attack. "Shoot me if you want to," he said.

"I don't want to," Truman answered.

"You might as well." The man continued to stare at him with an opaque sullenness. "Ain't you one of Old John Brown's men?"

"I'm not with John Brown now. And I never shoot anybody that doesn't try to shoot me first."

"Oh, you don't!" with a sneer. "And I reckon you don't take his horses or cattle either."

"Where are your horses and cattle?"

"You'd ought to know. The cattle's et up, I reckon, and some fellow like you is ridin' the horses."

John rode on, disturbed and anxious. This was the reverse side. A few miles farther on he drew up at the house of Mark Humiston, a Free State settler who had thus far escaped the depredations of pro-slavery militia and with his two boys and another man was attending soberly to the making of a farm. They were just coming in from the stacking of prairie-grass hay when John appeared. The invitation to stay all night was as natural and matter-of-course a form as "Good-evening," and John followed the man to the house. A thin white-faced woman with neat hair and dress gave a startled look at the stranger and then after a slight nervous greeting and without further word, added another place at the scantily-furnished table. John saw the farmer slide a clumsy hand over her shoulders once or twice as he passed her. But all

through the evening she did not speak at all, unless perhaps a word to the boys, and John saw how carefully she drew home-made paper shades at the windows and how often a tense listening look came to her white face. Her eyes looked as if they never willingly closed. All the story of guerilla warfare was written on the anxious faces of women, John thought sadly.

Humiston had not been troubled much, he said. He hardly knew why, except that he was on the circumference of the worst district. The fiercest encounters had all been beyond him. "And then," he added, "I haven't started anything."

"You haven't been out at all?"

"Only when I had to. I had to get some horses back. I got them too. And when they came to burn Johnson's store over there I got out and helped shoo them off. I had to be out several times like that. But the most of the time I've been farming. Somebody had to raise feed for next winter for the fellows that aren't raising any."

Humiston was an Ohioan, a fine farmer, solid and unexcitable. He went on into talk of soil and kinds of crops and John fell into it with a sort of relief. An hour of vigorous exchange of opinions on practical aspects of the country, wholesome business talk, rested him more than even sleep could have done. Humiston drew his wife down beside him on his wooden seat by the cookstove—the evening was chilly—and sat patting her hand as he balanced the possibilities of Kansas as corn or wheat granary for the country, throwing in a reassuring "That's nothing, Belle," once in a while, in answer to some tremor or startled look of hers. To realize that the prosaic stream of practical considerations of living went solidly on behind the currents of passion and crime and self-sacrifice, seemed all at once to clarify feeling for John.

But of necessity he came back to his main thought after a while. "Do you know where John Brown and his men are just now?"

"No—they say they went on south after Osawotamie."

"You weren't at Osawotamie?"

"No." Humiston went on in as matter-of-fact a way as

if he were still discussing plowing. "I suppose I'd have been if I'd known in time. But I haven't been out with Brown since he went into guerilla business. He put up a good fight at Osawotamie."

"He is a good fighter, and a great man."

"Well, yes, a kind of great man. I expect he'll do something big some day. But it'll be more by good luck than good looking. A great man, to my thinking, especially for this part of the country, has good sense seven days of the week. John Brown hasn't."

"He's a terrible man," Mrs. Humiston broke her shivering silence.

Her husband put his big hard hand cosily over hers again. "I couldn't stick with him even if I believed in jumping around here and there fighting, like a crazy hen picking up corn."

"He's too good a judge of horses," said the hired man from the other side of the stove, before John could answer showing the logic of Brown's movements. He was a big mild-looking Irishman, with a sweet drawling brogue, and he slid down in his straight kitchen chair as easily as if his chief art were making a lounging-place of the hardest kind of seat. John had looked at him before though, with an eye that had learned much about judging men, and he suspected that the array of guns in the corner was not all for Humiston's hands.

"The best judge of blooded stock in the country," said Humiston. "He rode a fine horse at Osawotamie, they say. So did all his men. Everyone of them had been taken from pro-slavery men and they were the pick. They had a hundred cattle they had lifted too. Of course," he went on reasonably, "we've lost too. I lost two calves when Pate had his Missourians round here and I got off easy compared with others. But the more we steal the more they'll steal. I can't help wanting to be a better man than a Buford guerilla myself."

"That's only one way of punishing them for their outrages," said Truman a little warmly.

"Yes, naturally—if the men you steal from are the ones that did the stealing first. But if a Missourian comes

and lifts your cattle it may be logical to go over and take a horse from a pro-slavery neighbor that has been staying at home and tending his crops, but all the same it isn't fair. Some of these pro-slavery settlers are pretty decent in spite of everything against their class, and it isn't right to shoot them down just because we can't get hold of Atchison and his gang. If you had ever been with Brown—"

"I have been," said John. Humiston stopped. "I was at the first battle of Osawotamie and some other places."

"That's different. Though I think if there hadn't been Dutch Henry's Crossing there mightn't have been a Black Jack. But I don't take you for a man to be mixed up in some things that have gone on under his name lately. I don't trust his methods," he ended briefly and firmly.

"It hasn't been proved that he was at Dutch Henry's Crossing," said John.

"No," said the farmer fairly. "But with all the talk he ought to prove that he wasn't."

The Irishman came in again and with his mellow drawl, "The angel of peace never presided at his birth, that man."

"If the whole territory were organized for defense at once and he put at the head of it I believe we could settle the matter of our safety immediately—and more than mere safety perhaps. Then we could go on to see about being admitted as a state."

"I may not be a fair judge of him, but I can't see him as a general. He can handle a few men that are devoted to John Brown or that sympathize with his kind of fighting. But there are too many that would always be ready to question it—like myself, I suppose. I've seen too much of that work. It isn't civilized enough for me. My father was a pioneer among the Indians in Ohio, and he passed along enough spirit to me to send me out here. I want to make a state and to give my boys a chance to be at the beginning of one, a free one. But I can't see John Brown as a fountain of civilization," he ended in his reasonable way. Then he added, "It isn't that it's John Brown or anybody, it's the whole plan. It isn't proper to the thing we came out here for."

John Truman had the desire to make retort upon him with spirited argument. But he was weary, and the quiet dispassionate reasoning of Humiston was harder to answer than bitter attack would have been. The figure of the wife also silenced him; Ellen was daily enduring a load ten times heavier than the one under which this woman was going down. And in the background of his mind there had remained all the evening the picture of the sore young southerner before his empty stables, taunting him with the appropriateness to himself of the act of robbery. He quietly and gratefully accepted the hard bed that was offered him and tried to sleep.

But he rode on to the south the next morning. In the fresh September morning his spirit also freshened, and his purpose. He now saw clear answer to all Humiston's argument. Humiston was striking at the gross incidentals which accompany all warfare but have nought to do with its purpose. There was never war, even organized war, without burnings and killings in the outer fringe of battle. That would pass and the clear point remain.

In the crisp live air and the expanse of look that always lifted his spirit, his conviction returned. Light rain had come in the night and the world was new. He fixed his eyes on the vivid Kansas sky where it met the rich September coloring of a hilltop, and fed his spirit upon it. It seemed to him still that beyond the ugliness, beyond the necessary violence, of this fight, he saw the freedom for which the sacrifice of fighting was to be made—saw it perhaps sanctified and glorified by the depth of that sacrifice. How they would take it to their hearts and build the life of this state upon it!

So rapt was he upon his horizon view and his visions that, as he took a path around the cheek of a hillside, he was only a few rods from a group of trees—a few cottonwoods and two or three big strayed walnuts neighboring them—when he saw them. Even then, in the mood that was upon him, he looked first at the contrast between the warm gray-white of the cottonwood bark and the wet black stems of the walnuts with their bright long leaves, before he saw the group of men under the trees. He hesitated,

but he was already in plain sight of them and there was nothing but an open slope before him, so he rode on. The smaller trees and the horses tied to them partly concealed the positions of the men from him until he was upon them.

In blundering horror he jerked back on his reins and his horse too swerved and snorted in protest at the sight. To the strong limb of a walnut tree hung the body of a man, and two men beside it handled the rope that held it. On the ground lay another man waiting his own time of suffering and a fifth stood near in an attitude of ineffective protest. John Truman saw it all in one glance of horrible comprehension. The figure on the rope writhed, tossing manacled arms and drawing up struggling knees. In the purpling face under the thatch of sun-faded light hair, the staring rolling eyes, the thick swelling lips, John recognized Jim North's.

"Let him down," said one of the men and the rope slid through their hands until the man's feet touched the ground. He raised his hands until he could catch at the rope with his thumbs and rested his head upon his bent arms, his body swaying and settling. The rubbed bark of the branch showed that the rope had already been drawn back and forth several times.

"Men!" shouted John Truman. "Stop that!"

One man looked at him indifferently, the other after a startled glance tried to draw behind the staggering body. But John had seen Selton's face, a little shamed and hesitant. "Selton!" he cried. "What's this for?"

"Cain't you see?" said Selton, swaggering forward with as much assertion as his unimpressive body would allow. "We got these border ruffians down here. They was out after cattle an' we got 'em. They was with the lot down at Osawotamie."

The other man stood in the same indifference, without a look at John. "Heave up again," he said, beginning to tighten the stretch of rope with a steady pull.

"Stop it!" shouted John, flinging himself from his horse and rushing to lay hand on the rope above North's head.

"Get out!" said the man with an oath. "Tend to your own business!"

"I told you fellows," began the man who was standing aside.

"Shut up," said the hangman, and to John, "Leggo, blast you!"

"Stop it," said John again, and without premeditation drew back and struck the man a heavy blow on the chin. He reeled back for a moment and the body of the hanging man fell with a heavy soft drop between them. John put his hand to his revolver but he couldn't resolve instantly on the necessity for shooting, and the man was upon him with a solid leap. He fell back a step to draw away from the obstacle of North's body and lost some ground of resistance. The man had a bulky strong body and long arms, and he now had one arm about John's shoulders and his right fist drawn back to strike. John dropped his head forward a little over the man's shoulder and the blow lost force. They turned and twisted with ineffective clinchings and close-range blows. John held tightly to the man, digging fingers into his muscles between blows, fighting clumsily, but determined not to use his revolver. He managed a strong blow at the man's neck and at the same time flung him off a few steps and gained position himself. But the other, regathering force, brought his heavy body forward with a rush. John braced himself and put up his hands. But the man's foot caught in a coil of the rope he had dropped and he plunged forward stumbling. John caught him and flung him face down and held him there.

"Now then," he said, panting with his exertions, "you'll listen to me. Selton, loosen that rope." The other man had jerked it tight in his fall and North was again gurgling and gasping. "I know this wasn't a fair fight, but I'll let you up in a minute. Selton!" John looked at him grimly.

"There ain't nothin' else to do," Selton burst out complainingly. "I git so doggoned tired of them infernally shootin' an' burnin'! They're dogs an' hogs, that's what they are," he ended with peevish vituperation.

"Well, we're not dogs and hogs," said John. He seated himself on the broad back of the prostrate man. "Untie

North." Selton did so with the aid of his knife. North turned and stretched himself with heavy distressed breathing, gasping and licking his swollen lips. "Now untie the other one." The third captor with an air of smug approval assisted, and the captive without raising his dull eyes sat up and began to chafe his welted wrists.

"Where's your wife, North?"

"Dead," snarled North weakly.

"You ought to be. Where did you come here from?"

"Missouri."

"You're going right back there as fast as you can. Both of you. If you ever come back here you'll be shot. You should have been this time. I'm not saving you because this performance isn't good enough for you, but because it's too bad for us. Do you see?"

John stood up and looked down at his antagonist, who slowly and sullenly rose to his feet. "Sorry, sir," said Truman in as frank and friendly a tone as he could manage. What the man had in mind no one could tell, but his shamed and acquiescing partners offered him no support and he said nothing.

The two southerners betook themselves shakily to their horses without a word. "That man," said John looking after the cowed and sullen North, his shadowy enemy of more than a year now, "was the first enemy I ever had in the territory. He's been after me now four or five times. I hope he will be the last," he added with a frank look at the other men. "We can't afford," he offered as reluctant moralizing, "to do things that will later be hard to live down and that will hurt our cause. It is not on this scale."

He took his horse again and rode away. But he rode back toward Lawrence now, instead of to the south. In a few minutes he returned to the men. "Selton," he said, "if you haven't anything to do here you'd better come home. Lawrence may need all of you at any time now."

XLI

HARDIE came into the Trumans' before dark that night, Roger Stivers and Judge Sayle with him, all on their way home from Lecompton.

"No food," said the lawyer, lifting a refusing hand. "We had Dionysian dainties in the shape of cornbread under the shade of a tent in Lecompton and shall have more in Lawrence. We eat only urban food."

"You look as gay as a wedding," said Ellen. She took up the wee Philip as she talked, a luxury she allowed herself only when she had a moment to rest from other labors.

"We have more reason to be gay than a wedding affords," said Sayle. Roger Stivers stooped to take the little man wistfully from Ellen. His love of children was almost a jest among his friends. Hardie, finding Mary propped up in the big chair, sat down to talk to her, with the air of deprecating boyish tenderness which he always brought to the sick or weak or hurt. "Weddings are poor serious things compared with us—the most serious things in the world," the judge went on.

"What do you mean by coming in here with all this cynicism and this party conversation?" Ellen demanded.

"No cynicism with us today," said Roger Stivers, lifting the baby's soft cheek to his sun-burned one and turning to draw a proud look from Mary.

There was such obvious content in the men, such apparent pleased relaxation in a domestic scene and in the presence of women that Ellen indulged them and controlled her curiosity. Evidently there was no tragedy to tell tonight, when men could enter in such ease of spirit.

The judge, who saw few women except here, always came in with an accumulation of gallantry on his hands which must be disposed of before he reached other matters. Ellen and Phœbe, liking him as they did, could not help

accepting, even welcoming, the intentional lightness of it and its reminder of another time and place. But tonight Ellen soon reached the end of her interest in persiflage and Sayle also allowed his vivacity to lapse. He looked thoughtfully across at the other two men—one drooping his big shoulders and shaggy head over the baby's little face and the other bending toward Mary with an air of fraternal tenderness—and said, "To think how these fighting men out here keep this tenderness and gentleness of feeling!"

"That is because they are fighting for gentleness of life," said Ellen quickly. "I don't believe that fighting for a moral principle can ever make men hard and rough."

"In spite of everything violent out here," said the judge slowly, "there is a kind of restfulness among you people." Ellen smiled and then laughed, and he went on. "Not objective, to be sure, but subjective. There is a moral certainty and ease among you. Prick any one of these men with a pin-point of idealism and you will get the same response from all of them. It is the greatest rest a lawyer could have, not to make an adjustment of moral expectations for every man he deals with. John Truman is not the least noble of them," he added.

Ellen flushed and did not try to answer, and he spoke out briskly, "These other men don't seem to be going to tell the news. Woodson's brief happy reign is over."

The women exclaimed, "How—has the governor come?" They had been waiting, almost from hour to hour, for this.

"The governor has come." Mary leaned forward in her chair and Phœbe fixed her gray eyes expectantly upon him. "Well?" said Ellen impatiently.

"He came yesterday and he sent for a lot of the Lawrence men today.—I'm not the one to tell the tale. Hardie and Stivers there had the deserved honor of admittance to council."

Ellen tried to ignore a pang that John had not been there to be called in among these men, his friends. "Well?" she said again, turning to the other men. "Don't tease us with your superiorities."

"Yes," said Stivers, "we colloquied with the governor.

He seems to have the novel purpose of trying to find out the truth. That alone would give Woodson and Lecompte a shock. None of our friends of that stripe were invited to this feast. The governor had some hours with them before and got their side of things and now he wanted ours, squarely."

"What is he like?"

"A good deal like a pugnacious pedagogue. But he seems to be an honest sort of fellow, if one may speak of governors in those common terms. I fancy he's been something of a demagogue, used to wheeling his party into line, and he doesn't know yet that the Washington yardstick isn't enough for us to cut our cloth by. He has some surprises coming to him."

"Sort of stage governor—brings his fist down on the table and roars, 'By Heaven I'm the governor of this state!'?" asked Judge Sayle.

"Oh, no—not at all. Better than that. We'll have to see. Anyway he is going to try to give us a rest. He has already ordered Atchison's militia to disband and go home to their several states."

"Oh—thank Heaven!" cried Ellen, and the other women drew a long breath.

"Yes—and him. But they haven't gone yet."

"But Colonel Cooke is still at Lecompton with the United States troops. With a man like Governor Geary to use them it will be a different thing from having Woodson call them in."

"Doctor Robinson and the other men were released yesterday," said Hardie abruptly, carrying on the telling of news.

"Oh—*that's* something," cried Phœbe, with a long breath of relief.

"The Tower is empty of political prisoners. He is in Lawrence tonight."

"But his house is burned," said Mary, her voice falling.

"I fancy he is used to the notion of that. There are plenty of people to keep them. Mrs. Robinson has been living in a tent in Lecompton since the first of June, to be near him."

"After all, the 'militia' are not disbanded yet," said Hardie gravely. "This is a great relief to find the Governor's temper what it is and to find him a fair man and get Woodson out of the chair, but we're not out of the woods yet."

"Oh, he will soon be a roaring abolitionist like the rest of the rulers that come out here. You do manage to infect innocent officers that are sent to you," said Sayle.

"I wonder when you will quit saying *you* and begin to say *we,*" said Phœbe demurely.

"I want to keep the historical point of view of you."

"Truman saw Miles home?" said Hardie as they rose to go.

"He is not back yet—I expect him tonight," said Ellen steadily. "He thought it might be necessary to stay all night at the Mileses."

Hardie nodded soberly. But he thought he knew that John had had a purpose in mind when he went away, and he was surmising deeply regarding it.

Then, while the judge was beginning his goodnights and Stivers was trying to put the baby from his arms without disturbing his infantile sleep, they heard a sound outside and John's voice, handing his horse over to Bob.

They waited for him and he came in with a kind of serious eagerness, his eyes ready for the sight of some one person. They could easily guess who that was, and Hardie at least caught a glimpse of his dissatisfaction in finding the room full. But he quickly concealed that and in a moment they were telling him their news.

"I'm sorry I wasn't here," he said quickly. "I might not have been invited to Lecompton, but if the Governor is like this we must show our readiness to work with him and we must try to see enough of him to keep him rightly informed."

Ellen and Hardie both caught instantly a different note in his speech. There was a hearty lack of reserve in it, an immediate positive element that had been lacking as he came and went in recent weeks. At the same time they found a serious apprehension that made Hardie ask quickly, "What do you know?"

"Atchison's militia are collecting to march on Lawrence. There are about two thousand of them. I saw a man tonight from over beyond Franklin."

There was a long breath and apprehensive silence, even from the men. "But they hadn't the Governor's order yet," said Mary hopefully in a minute.

"An order for Senator Atchison!—the more men they have the less likely to obey an order."

"We must gather in all the Lawrence men," said John firmly.

"Fifty of them are off with Lane up north. After their attack at Lecompton last week missed fire, they went off up there."

"They should be brought back. They are needed here. Every man should stay near home these days."

Hardie and Stivers both looked closely at Truman. It was evident that he was speaking with intention of showing his views. "It's certainly time to stay by the stuff," said Stivers.

The satisfaction with which the men had entered earlier had clouded before they took their departure. They talked long, but reached no conclusion except to gather in all Lawrence men and to appeal to the Governor and await results. But Hardie's face had taken on its sternest lines when he rose to go.

"This was to have been a farewell call," said the lawyer as he rose. "I was trying to make plans to start east this week."

"Better wait, Sayle. The biggest show of all is coming on," said Stivers, grimly.

"I think I shall. I may have a chance to take part in it." He had taken on something of the grimness of the other men. "I have to go back to attend to some business matters and shall stay out the winter. But in the spring, if I don't age too much for this young country in the meantime, I shall be back to settle among you. I never saw a place more in need of able and honest interpretation of the law," he added with a return to his usual manner.

They laid aside other thought to give warm welcome to

his intention. "You know you have had a hankering to stay, all the time," said Stivers.

"I feel that I am complimenting myself when I say that I think I belong here," said Sayle. "But it is true that the best of a man feels at home in this place."

"And Mrs. Sayle?" asked Ellen, recalling that afternoon in Lawrence, with shots flying over them.

"It will be more of an effort for her than for me. But she wants to come back. It was like a taste of wild orange. She didn't like it and wants more."

The men rode off in the dark and Phœbe went to tuck Mary in and bring the last needments for the baby.

"Ellen," said John, "come out. I want to talk." He found a shawl to bring and wrap around her and they wandered off beyond the side of the house to where the spring-seat of a wagon, placed on the ground, offered them a low seat.

"Like a park seat," said Ellen, testing its resiliency. "Why don't they have springs in them? Oh, John!" she cried, turning to him with a long breath of wearied relief. "You have been away!" Something in his manner already had made it possible for her to imply more feeling than she had ever done before on his home-coming.

"But I'm back, not to go away again unless I have to. I'll fight here when I fight next, I believe—I fear, perhaps. I was wrong and you were right about all this, Ellen. I was wrong. You saw more clearly, and so did these men here. A defensive fight should have been enough. We have done at least as much harm as good. That is a bitter thing too."

Without allowing her to speak he went on, "It is still bitterer that I have left so much of the burden here to you. If it had been necessary that would have been only an honor to you. But it was wrong and it was too hard. It wasn't fair to you, dear. I think I have looked on your courage and strength and ability as endless, as if I could draw on them like the ocean. They apparently are—but the heavy cost to you, dear!

"I am not telling you all that made me know this, now, but some time when regret is not so sharp as it is now.

But I want you at least to know that there are no cruelties or unnecessary blows on my record—''

''John!'' cried Ellen.

''You might have thought it. I was associated with some men like that. Some good men are growing terrible in this guerilla war.''

''I thought you were wrong all the time,'' said Ellen steadily. She had let him write himself wrong in full before she tried to speak. ''And I think your John Brown is. He is a great man in his way, I really believe. But he doesn't seem to fit in with anything in this world. You have never belonged with him—and I don't believe you have ever done him so very much good,'' she ended with a laugh. ''You're a 'mighty pore guerilla,' as your friend Mr. Selton would say.

''But it was the difference between us that I hated—you will never know,'' she added to herself, and refrained from further saying. But she felt as if she had come back to a home for which she had suffered.

It was an undramatic ending to the sore difference. Even reserved John felt that more explanation, more emotion, was due to it. He had thought on it all through this afternoon ride, on all he owed to Ellen, in fact and in feeling. But to feel her beside him now and know there was no reserve, no withdrawal, on his side or hers, was more than any fulness of expression.

From the window of her little darkened room Phœbe was looking out over the prairie. It did not seem possible, as she looked upon its pale sweet emptiness, that there went to and fro on it such terror, such ugliness. It was a thing ever new and freshly strange to her, the combination of the reserved beauty of this virgin country with the unkempt maudlin wickedness loose upon it.

It was strange too, to have her own life entangled with this. The first excitement, the daily dramatic novelty, of danger, had passed and the recurring threats and alarms had begun to assume a sameness of result. The thrill of rising courage was lost when courage was called upon hourly. Yet Phœbe clung doggedly to her place, looking

back upon each accomplished day as nothing and always expectant of the greatest test of all. Whenever the opportunity for retreat came she found herself answering involuntarily, "I choose this." She was not a self-analyst, yet she took an interest, a repressed pleasure, in recognizing the response of fundamental elements in herself to the demands of hardship and danger. "I should never have known what I was like if I had stayed at home," she said once to Ellen, in a rare moment of comment upon herself.

"You would have missed a lovely piece of knowledge then," said Ellen with a caress. But Phœbe had ended the subject with that.

Yet one subject of analysis she did return to. She settled the point and resettled it, and still she came back to it. Was it after all mere pride, a childish demand for recognition on an undeserved plane, that kept her from meeting the love of a man like Lewis Hardie? He figured in all she loved in this place and in her own life here—brave, tender, lovable, piquant, strong. She remembered his suffering over Mary, over Harvey, his responsible kindness, his control, his humor that had enriched the aspect of many a hard moment. When she recognized her own pride in his courage and sense, she faltered consciously on the recognition. Had Ellen, for instance, asked whether John loved her as a comrade-in-arms before she accepted his love? Had Mary there stopped to analyze adoration before she joyfully gave adoration in return? Did she herself ask for what nothing but smug egotism could ask?

But when she waited for an answer, willing, perhaps eager, to learn herself wrong, she found her impulsive answer always the same, "No—it isn't only egotism. It is at least partly honesty and reverence for love itself. Whatever I want, I can't take love on any false basis."

XLII

THE atmosphere of trouble grew the next day. Men passed back and forth on the road, often in groups. Many who stopped confirmed anxiously the rumor—no longer a rumor—of the approach of Atchison. John rode to Lawrence and then came hurrying back with other men on their way to Lecompton to seek an interview with the Governor and ask him to come to Lawrence himself. They returned presently with his promise and some slight reassurance from the sight of Colonel Cooke and his troops —and with the conviction that the Governor not only intended but expected to prevent bloodshed. But they had seen governors fail before. How much influence might Titus and Atchison and Buford and Jones have, even in such a patent case as this?

It was after noon when John came galloping back with the others from Lecompton and he took a hasty lunch, saying he must be off again at once. They were gathering all men possible in to Lawrence and they were throwing up embankments and renewing the fort that had been made last year and fortifying the remains of the stone Free State Hotel. John was going out to make a round of settlers' places to see how many men he could find who were not yet accounted for.

"It may be like the time last fall, Ellen," he said. "Watson may bring Mrs. Watson here and you may have to have the Seltons again, though I hope not, and others. We can't tell what is coming. Amos is helping Bob this afternoon—as much as he can—and I sent them both over to help Selton with his hay—partly to keep him at home. That's the best place for Selton until he's really needed. But they're near enough so that a revolver shot will reach and bring them. I hate to leave you, Ellen."

He spoke with anxiety, but only a simple practical anx-

iety. Ellen welcomed it—it was so clear and natural and without complications of reserves. In spite of everything her spirits were high—since last night almost serene.

"Of course you do," she said, "and I hate it. But I'm buckling on your harness in my mind every minute, dear."

She stood by him as he changed his saddle from one horse to another. The wind was blowing a sheet of wavy short hairs straight forward about her face and within it her eyes shone vividly blue and her face rosy in the sun. She braced her shoulders against the wind with a backward pose that was alive and alert. John looked at her while he drew up the straps of his saddle-girth.

"You are a fatuous person," she said. "You're admiring me with my hair blown into a sunbonnet like this."

"It would be hard to find any time when I'm not admiring you," said John. "Hair and all."

He was wondering once more that the hardness of this life was leaving so little mark on her, as it did on Mrs. Selton and other women. The dimness of those days of Philip's death was gone, and in the presence of this new danger all her spirit shone out as if rising to a challenge. John Truman, in his modest imperception, did not know how much he and his change of purpose and view had done for this vivification.

"Come farther away," he said, dropping his voice and leading her farther from the house. "There is ammunition there, over in the end of that shed." He did not even look toward it in his caution, although no one outside the household could be observing them. "It partly came down from Iowa with that last crowd of immigrants. I kept a little here. But it will be needed in Lawrence instead of where I thought. Tonight after dark some of us will haul it in there. Don't be surprised when men come. I just wanted you to know."

"Yes," said Ellen, pleased at getting his full confidence. John mounted. "You're taking Widmer." She stroked him with wistful recollection.

Widmer had been kept, precious but difficult keepsake of Harvey, petted and treasured but a steady cause of anxiety. Many a time had they started awake in the night

thinking a sound at the stables meant a seeker of the beautiful horse.

"I must ride faster than any of the other horses can take me. Joe Bennet has half promised to take him back to Iowa next week, where we needn't worry about him for the present."

He raced off at Widmer's long gallop and Ellen took a survey of her premises before returning to the house. Amos, with the faithful unimaginative Bob, was just starting off to his neighborly helping of Selton and Ellen sent a pitiful look toward him. Amos had gone about ever since he rose from bed, in a dim pathetic sort of way, evidently trying to explain things to his own mind and to overtake some kind of elusive purpose. While Ellen had waited on him, in the days he spent in bed, he had told her, fragmentarily and partly by implication, about his movements of the summer, and shyly hinted an apology for the mystery of his comings and goings, for his silence. Two or three times negroes had been successfully carried over into Iowa; other attempts had failed. This was the first time Amos had acted as principal—other times he had been only an assistant—and he was deeply mortified over the result. In his gentle way he was troubled over laying the necessity for rescue on his friends; but he was tragically remorseful over taking the slaves from Kansas plowing and sending them down to the cotton-fields. He went about now sadly thoughtful. John wished to keep him away from Lawrence in its present alarmed state, and tried to make him seem necessary about the place. Ellen waved a felicitating hand as she saw him now going off, and drew a dim grateful smile from him.

She remembered that she had not seen Mrs. Selton for two days and, picturing the terror in which that frail-spirited vessel must now be living, she ran over to carry what verbal reinforcement she could. John, with all his confidence, had not told her of the occurrence in which he had found Selton.

"It jest seems like I cain't stand it," Mrs. Selton whimpered as soon as she found one to listen to her. "It jest

seems like we jest go from one thing to another the hull time."

"Yes, we do," Ellen assented cheerfully. "We always do that if we want to keep on living. It's pretty hard but we're just made so we can stand it when we have to. See, I brought the children a little cake. It isn't rich enough to hurt them. That is one thing out here—we don't have to worry about keeping rich food away from the children. But it looks like a cake and it smells like a cake and it will taste almost like a cake."

Mrs. Selton acknowledged the gift tearfully. "I had some sour cream yestuday an' I 'lowed to make a kind o' cake, an' then it jest don' seem wuth while to make anythin' when Tom may git killed any day. I don' 'low to have them border ruffians find anythin' to eat here when they come along."

"I wouldn't starve the children for that reason," laughed Ellen. "Anyway they say there is no danger yet. The soldiers are coming down from Lecompton to take care of us if we need them." She emphasized that hope as a certainty and tried to leave it fixed in the poor woman's mind.

Later in the afternoon, an afternoon of watching and surmising, she looked at Mary's face, drooping a little, pitifully, as she sat brooding over her baby. "Mary," she cried. "You are well enough to walk a little piece and you ought to. Let's take the baby down and surprise Mrs. Laird. Isn't there a proverb about the first house a baby goes into? I'm sure he couldn't go into a better one for him."

She whisked Mary into readiness with a great show of excitement over the occasion and added Phœbe to the party —there was nothing to be gained by staying at home anyway—and made much of permitting the little boys to go along as a great favor, and they all trooped down the hill to Mrs. Laird's. Mrs. Laird was even more surprised than she showed, until she read care for Mary under Ellen's apparent emphasis of the occasion, and then she made an answering show of eagerness. No one could have guessed,

to see the group exhibiting the growing wonders of the bland young Philip, what Ellen and Phœbe carried in their sagging pockets.

Ellen had intended to slip away and leave the others there. But it was Phœbe who, at a moment when the rest were not looking, made a silent sign to Mrs. Laird and stole out and sped up the hill. She had seen Hardie's horse pass at a gallop and now she saw Hardie moving about the house as if in search of something.

He hurried toward her when she came into sight. "Where is everyone?" he asked quickly.

Phœbe explained briefly.

"Do you know anything about any powder and shot here?" He was hurried, abrupt.

"No."

"There is some here and a spy we have over at Franklin told me some of the Blue Lodge men were coming this afternoon to get it. I sent word to Lawrence but I didn't have time to go by there to get anyone else. Help me hunt."

"I am sure it is not in the house or the cave."

"The stables then."

They rushed to them. They both knew them so well that there were few hiding-places for them to search. But they breathlessly examined mows and dark floors. "It may be buried," said Hardie. "I wish John had told me." He looked back anxiously along the road.

"Here!" cried Phœbe, her eyes to a crack at what seemed to be the end of a shed built against a bank. "It's here."

Hardie looked. "Now then—it's too heavy to move. Think, Phœbe! We must save it for ourselves if possible."

Their eyes ranged the place. "The new well!" cried Phœbe. A little farther down the slope, beside an unfinished stack of hay, a well had been begun and dug down a few feet and then abandoned for the time. Hardie ran to look. "I can't think of anything better. Get me a hatchet or axe." He went to search for one himself but it was she who found it first. He began to force the boards off the end of the shed, saying, "Go and throw some hay

down into the well—and then see if you can find a strong board—if you please."

The courtesy was perfunctory and Phœbe laughed a little as she ran. She found a plank and dragged it to the side of the well, while Hardie forced the wall of the shed and slid out a small keg and rolled it down the slope. He adjusted the plank with its end against the side of the well, near the top. "Now you hold that firm—don't let it slip." He rolled the keg down on it cautiously. "Hold it! Put all your weight on it! Now I'll take it."

He carefully lowered the end of the board until the keg could slip easily down on the hay at the bottom. "We have to save it for ourselves as well as keep it from them," he said as they hurried back. "There aren't twenty rounds apiece in Lawrence this minute. You can take one too." And Phœbe stooped to roll one under his direction. Once in her haste she got hers out of its course and it bumped against his. "Good heavens!" he exclaimed, "keep that straight—this is powder!" He had further sharp directions to give regarding the adjustment of the plank, while he constantly looked over his shoulder toward the road. There were only two more kegs and with feverish haste they got them down the hill safely and lowered to a nest on the hay.

"There's a wagon," cried Phœbe, turning as the last one thumped softly down into place. A wagon with two men and three riding beside it, had made the turn on the road above and was coming toward the house. From where they stood by the well the group was projected against the sky, the wagon a dark bulk and the figures of the men bristling about it. The road swerved away again and they could see only the black bobbing heads on the rim of the hill. Hardie seized a spade and began to shovel earth into the well. Phœbe found a sharp-edged board and worked beside him. The well was almost full when the wagon appeared again, nearer.

"Run to the house, Phœbe," gasped Hardie, "and collogue with them as well as you can, while I pile hay on this."

He did not even look after her as she darted up the

slope, but bent his lean figure to tossing enormous forkfuls of hay and spoiling the stack until it seemed to be spilled all over the ground. "There's so much bad farming out here that they won't know the difference," he said. Then he had another thought and began deliberately to reshape the stack with the end of it over the well, as if it were just in the process of building.

Phœbe entered the house from the back and opened the front door a moment after the wagon had drawn up in front of it. She said nothing and the men hesitated an instant before speaking. For the assumed festivity of going down to Mrs. Laird's she had slipped on a flowing blue silk dress with sloping shoulders and lace collar encircling her white throat, a dress inappropriate for any ordinary day or occasion. She borrowed a leaf from Ellen and opened the door with gracious social manner and stood calmly waiting to be addressed. The men, all ready with their demand, stopped and hesitated at sight of a slender young lady in fashionable dress and with a manner foreign to all their circumstances.

Then one of them dismounted and came nearer, taking off his hat. "We have an errand to this house," he said. "Is there anyone else here?"

"No one is in the house at the moment," said Phœbe serenely. "But I can call others if necessary. Can I answer any questions for you?"

Another man flicked his horse forward, a coarser, louder man than the first. "We want something that's hid in this house and we haven't any time to talk. We want some powder and shot that's hid here."

"I don't think there is any," said Phœbe. "I've never seen it here and the house isn't large."

"We'll just have a look for ourselves with your permission."

He flung himself from the saddle and passed his bridle-rein to a man in the wagon. The man who had spoken first entered with him, with a slight air of apology directed toward Phœbe, who stood quietly by to let them enter, but with an air of giving them permission. The more time they wasted the better. They went hastily and roughly.

through the rooms, looking into all spaces, poking their gun-barrels into trunks and closets and stirring up their contents, sounding walls and floors, flinging furniture rudely out of place to look for hidden corners.

Hardie worked until he was sure that his occupation had been observed and then came up the hill, stopping to put the boards back into place on the shed. As he approached, the men at the wagon scattered to search the stables and yards. They passed him with a surly word and he went on to the house to be near Phœbe. He would not start a quarrel until necessary. The men ignored him, as if the result of questioning would be worthless anyway. He stood at the door and restrained himself with difficulty while he saw them tossing Ellen's possessions about, growing angrier with their failure to find what they sought. The men at the yards were piercing the thatched shed-roofs with pitchforks and throwing about the hay in the mows. They reached the new stack down by the fence at the bottom of the yard, and he saw them tossing the hay about and jabbing the piles again and again with forks, seeking a solid resistance. Shouts and disappointed execrations flew back and forth as they persisted, reluctant to acknowledge failure. Then at last he saw them leave the haystack.

A moment later he was standing facing a line of angry men, curved about him as he stood against the house.

"You will tell us where that powder is," said one thrusting a dark snarling face forward, his undershot jaw projecting his rough black beard directly at Hardie.

"I don't live here," said Hardie. "This isn't my house."

"Like hell it ain't. You seem to be mighty easy round here anyway."

Beyond the heads of the men Hardie had a glimpse of Phœbe's blue dress rounding a corner of one of the sheds. He felt a greater tension at the thought of what risk she might be running, and yet a hope also for some result. Undoubtedly she had some purpose. If they could hold these men off until the Lawrence men came! He looked from one pair of eyes before him to another, black or dull

gray or pale blue, but all lit with a bright point of angry determination.

"What you doin' hyar?" demanded one man.

"I was stacking some hay from that place over there. We were changing work." He nodded toward Selton's.

Phœbe's clear young voice rang out from below the sheds with a long "Hooo-o-o-ee," and a revolver shot and then another followed.

The men listened and turned about, taking a step or two toward the place. At the same time there came into view, around a thicket in a draw that marked the middle of Selton's stretch of hay, Selton, then Amos' bent figure, finally sturdy Bob, all running and drawing revolvers as they ran. They seemed to emerge from the thicket—no one could tell how many more were hidden there. The Missourians halted, cautiously drawing weapons. Another shot came from the shed, and after a pause another. Selton and his men leaped the fence and disappeared into the region of the sound. In a moment another shot passed the men. They drew back a step or two toward their wagon. Hardie darted from his place and joined Selton and the others.

Then, while the Missourians seemed to hesitate between battle and flight, came the pounding of horses' feet on the Lawrence road and shouts, as a group of Lawrence men caught sight of the wagon and horses. The border ruffians took a look at the number of the new forces and with a shout leaped to their horses and were off straight across the prairie without even a backward shot, the end of the empty wagon-box bouncing on the axles as the driver lashed his team to a run. Roger Stivers brought his men to a tumbling halt and sent a few complimentary shots after the party, "So they'll know for sure that they are gone."

Only a few minutes later John Truman appeared from the other direction, coming back from his warning-out of men and bringing two others with him, and at the same time Ellen came flying up the hill from Mrs. Laird's, where the sound of shots had reached her.

The others came out through the yard-gate and with half

a dozen voices together the story was told, the excited Tom Selton coming in at every interval with his high, "An' when I heered them shots of Miss Murray's—"

"You saved the day for us, Mr. Selton," replied Phœbe gratefully.

The story ended in Stivers' big laugh as he clapped Hardie on the shoulder. And then everybody laughed, and laughed a second time, glad for a moment of even grim merriment in the midst of this harsh day.

"Phœbe darling!" cried Ellen falling upon her to kiss her. Then she laughed again as she added, "I wish I could have seen you two rolling those kegs down the hill, and you in your Ladies' Book silk gown."

Embarrassment had fallen upon Hardie, which was more than merely the embarrassment of hearing himself praised. A recollection which was almost more than he could bear had a moment ago come upon him. He looked entreatingly at Phœbe. But Phœbe was hedging herself in with the others and with much talk and laughter and exhibition of damage to her gown.

"Well," said John briskly, "now you can just take those kegs up again and while there are so many of us here together we'll take them to town. Phœbe, you ought to dig out at least as much as you put in."

There was more laughter about the well, as some of the men remade the haystack and others dug out the well again. No one could have supposed that an episode at once so light and so threatening could have happened on this dark day, or that it could have caused such lifting and bracing of spirits.

But Hardie had to ride off with the others to Lawrence and he had no further word with Phœbe that day. He could not even see the carefulness with which Phœbe put away her damaged gown.

XLIII

IN the night galloping hoofbeats passed on the road beyond, feet that said haste—haste—danger—haste!—and Ellen sat up in bed. They went from Lawrence toward Lecompton. Silence closed in behind them. She listened fiercely, but only to a thick quiet from which those beating hoofs gradually drew away. Nothing followed.

She slipped from her bed and went softly, barefoot, to Mary's room, to see if she too listened. But Mary's rhythmic breath, covering the soft breathing of her son, was undisturbed, and Ellen stole back to Phœbe's bed.

"Did you hear them?" she whispered.

"Yes."

Ellen knelt on the bare floor and they clasped hands tightly in the dark. In earlier days they had denied danger. Now they met closely over it.

"It was messengers for help," said Ellen. "That couldn't be any other riding."

Horsemen passing in the darkness—when have they not given cause to the imagination? Even in their listening and straining anxiety, the women felt a dramatic pulsation as they followed those pounding feet in the dark. Ellen imagined Widmer's fleet hoofs among that flying corps.

John had gone down to Lawrence in the late evening and had stayed. He was torn hourly between the need for his presence at home and the need for men in Lawrence. The enemy was now not far beyond Franklin, gathering in greater and greater numbers. All roaming skirmishers were drawing in under one banner. The joys of solitary raiding were given over for the hope of one grand satisfying act of desolation. The favorite leaders were there also, Atchison and Buford and Jones.

Why they had not attacked at once no one could guess.

With their present numbers they could in one hour overwhelm Lawrence and destroy the place, and then sweep on to Topeka. Nothing but the command of the Governor —a slender thing in the territory up to this time—seemed to stand between Lawrence and destroying assault.

Ellen lying awake with aching ears awaiting informing sounds, at length caught again the sound of hoofbeats, returning,—more in number now, less driven, reguluar, authoritative. In the dim morning, the palest light to be called light, she saw a body of men pass, one leading—by only a half-length, but enough to name him leader. They rode steadily, forward-leaning, silent.

No border ruffians rode with that purpose and discipline. Authority seemed to have gone along that road.

Another sound came, deeper, rhythmical. Phœbe and Ellen met at the open door with a cry that brought Mary also. Between them and the edge of the eastern sky, hundreds of men were passing in regular rank—no mob, no border militia—government troops. The Federal soldiers were riding to Lawrence.

At midnight Free State scouts had come flying in from the south. There was movement beyond Franklin, a stirring in the dark, men advancing, waiting for others, advancing slowly again. Atchison and his men were on their way. A shout in Lawrence brought every man awake and every signal into use. In the dark men hurried into place. Behind barricades they awaited the attack of overwhelming numbers. A call for swift horses brought John with Widmer and Roger Stivers' black Nige and Done Riley on his Indian pony, said to have a strain carried down through many generations from some Spaniard-brought Arabian. Theirs were the feet Ellen heard on the Lecompton road.

Behind their hummocky fortifications men waited through a silent dark hour and another and another. In their frail houses, or within the walls of the "fort" which a few months ago had been the hotel, women waited, holding children tight against their sides, fighting fear with brave thoughts alone.

"I've got down to the very bones of my courage," said a woman in Mrs. Marsh's dark front room, speaking huskily across her sleeping baby.

"Well, keep them," chirped Mrs. Marsh, "and you'll get some more meat on them tomorrow."

Horsemen reconnoitered constantly to the southward, bringing back word of movement but not yet of organized advance. Captains distributed the scanty ammunition carefully, with many cautions against wasteful firing. Women prayed and listened, and prayed and listened. Behind the shaded windows of Joseph Winter's house, Mrs. Winter and other women made cartridges from the powder John had brought in the evening before. For the whole settlement, clocks that struck off the hours seemed to measure solid lengths of anxiety.

The thick dark was changing into the thick gray of a cloudy dawn. One could hardly tell at first whether the drumming of horses' feet came from the south or the west. A stir of ready-making ran through the lines of men. Then a cry from the west side, a cry of relief, "Here they come!" and in a moment a group of men riding sedately, pulled up in the street. An authoritative voice called "Where is Captain Abbott?" and Captain Abbott came forward briskly from his share of the command. The territorial Governor had come to Lawrence.

Half an hour later the town listened for the first time in its brief life to the sound of regular military march, and in the dawn saw four hundred United States dragoons drawn up at its outskirts. Scouts sent out again brought word that the coming daylight showed the militia returning to camp beyond Franklin and the level Wakarusa valley free of them. The enemy had retreated.

Governor Geary from his saddle surveyed all that the growing light revealed to him. It was his first view of Lawrence and he looked with curiosity on the little infant town and on its small ill-armed body of defenders and its makeshift fortifications, pitiful to one of its partisans, laughable to a military man. He addressed them with words of reassurance.

"It is my intention as Governor of this territory," he said at the last, "to put an end to all illegal and unwarranted fighting. It is my duty to govern the territory without partizanship and as peacefully as possible. I have already ordered the disbanding of the so-called militia within the territory. I shall this morning send out to them a further announcement of that order. Lawrence may consider itself safe. I have brought the Federal troops this morning for your reassurance, but they will not be needed. The authority of the Governor is the highest authority in this place."

John Truman, from his place beside the Governor, with whom he had ridden into town looked into one face after another as Geary spoke. Men looked strained and weary after their watching night. They stood resting the stocks of their weapons on the ground, their hands on the barrels, and they kept unmoving eyes on the Governor's face as he talked. Their eyes were shrewd, inquiring, sometimes confident, sometimes suspicious. But what else could be done but to imply entire trust in the Governor and to accept his judgment in taking the troops back to Lecompton?

Yet Lawrence men and women looked after them with wistful and disappointed eyes as they marched away again, and returned sadly to the business of the day. Over beyond the Wakarusa three thousand men still camped and threatened. There were three or four hundred men behind those low earthworks in Lawrence.

Men talked late that night at John Truman's. Some had come out to supper, since every meal eaten outside of Lawrence was a gain for the scantily-supplied town. And some, uneasily riding about in a general reconnoitering of the prairie, had stopped on hearing the voices of the others.

The women listened from the next room. Ellen looked in once in a while on the roomful of sunburned and dusty men, each with revolver belt and with gun or rifle beside his chair. Even Hardie, notable always for careful appropriateness of dress, was disheveled.

"It ain't over," said rough Milt Fisher, slapping his

knee with his folded slouch hat. "The Guvner comes round and jelly-fishes and goes back again, but that don' do nothin'. We're right where we was yesterday. What do them skunks stay down on the Wakarusa for?" he demanded.

"That is neatly summarized," said Hardie. "Why do they?"

"On the other hand why don't they attack?" said Fraser.

"That is also neat and logical, my Caledonian friend." Hardie was flippant. He was dispirited and tired in all his soul of this eternal friction of resultless fighting. His weary eyes were also much on the door beyond which he knew Phœbe was sitting with Ellen and Mary.

"I am afraid we'll never get a final result on this until after the November election," said John Truman gravely.

"Not if there's any chance to get votes both coming and going," Fraser pulled at his dusty beard as if trying to think out an answer for a perplexed government.

"If Jim Buchanan's elected we'll be a blamed sight worse off than we are now," said Riley.

"Yes, our safest time is while the Democrats are kept guessing."

"They could have wiped out the whole town last night if they had tried before the soldiers got there," said a man who had been out scouting.

"They may tonight," said John grimly. "There are no soldiers there."

"It is in the gentle feline nature of our friend Atchison," said Stivers. "He wants us to realize all he is going to do before he does it. We are the mouse."

"To think that Cap Harvey only pulled out yesterday!" Fisher burst out, ignoring their talk.

"Yes," Fraser acknowledged sadly, "if he and Lane had only waited."

Colonel Lane, at the very moment when the Governor's order regarding militia was going forth, had taken a body of men and set off toward the north. And only yesterday he had sent back for more men to help him attack a pro-slavery post up near Leavenworth. Captain Harvey had taken a hundred men and gone.

"That's two hundred men we ought to have right now," said Done Riley.

Blame of the men was passed back and forth, in Fisher's mouth and Riley's very bitter. The other men were seriously disapproving, though less loud in denunciation. John was quiet.

"Which way did they go?" he asked.

Riley could tell him. "Harvey wanted me to go along." He outlined the road they had planned.

"I go on picket duty," said Hardie rising.

"So do I," said Riley, looking at his big silver watch.

Hardie delayed until the last possible moment, but Stivers and the others also lingered, to ride with him. He looked into the kitchen to say goodnight, but though Phœbe looked up and smiled at him, he saw no means to separate her from the others for even a word, and rode impatiently away.

But of the men who rode away from Trumans' that night, or of those who picketed that dark camp until the morning hours, few really believed that Government troops would be used against slavery militia for the defense of a Free State town.

XLIV

AGAIN messengers galloped over the Lecompton road. It was full day this time and Ellen saw the flying horses, moving smoothly along that now well-beaten trail. She went to the other side of the house to look. If Lawrence were burning the smoke would show. The sky was clear—and blue as if it covered only peace. But through the bright air a sound came across the hill—the sharp peppering sound of shots, many shots.

Ellen turned to Phœbe and saw in her face what she knew was in her own—fear, not only for a whole community, but for a man in battle. The three women drew together, arms about each other. All the danger of all the months past, the fears they had put aside, the anxiety they had firmly refused to acknowledge, seemed to be gathered in this moment. Down in the valley an army was advancing upon Lawrence. And the Federal troops were again back in Lecompton and many of the men of Lawrence had marched away.

All the morning tense waiting and suspense had held Lawrence. The Governor might come and go, but out there at Franklin stood Atchison and his men.

Yet at first every moment of waiting was a gain, something snatched back from the anxiety of the day. Women especially recovered themselves and went busily, in concerted plan, about their share of providing for the host of men in the village. Leaders tried to perfect discipline and plans. Abbott and Walker and Speer and Robinson conferred and conferred again. John Truman was at first often with them. After Doctor Robinson's long absence everyone was eager to have word with him again. Recruits from other settlements arrived from time to time.

And yet after all talk and making ready, the solid business of the day was waiting, merely waiting.

Then from the south came three men riding hard, ap-

proaching at different angles from the Wakarusa. The middle one, coming the straightest road, was Done Riley. Men looking through glasses knew his pony's low level run.

"They're moving!" was the shout they tried to fling ahead of them. Each man from his post of view had been sure of this: there was undoubtedly definite arranging for marching. This army had no such machinery or discipline as enabled it to start movement readily. But they had the power of swarming numbers. When thousands of men overran a little village, it would matter little what their marching step was.

But they were moving. And the Federal soldiers were back at Lecompton!

Again Black Nige was put to the road and Riley's tireless pony. Abbott looked a moment for John Truman and Widmer, but not seeing him instantly he called Luther Lakin with his powerful roan, and the men were off along the bright September road. Men and women looked after them longingly, trying to wish a haste into their willing feet. It seemed far to Lecompton. And after all Geary might not send the soldiers again.

Again they waited. But the waiting was now filled with a bustling, shifting preparation. Every plan that had been made for organization or discipline was now to be put to the test. Earthworks crossed the south end of the street. Behind those the chief defense would be. Rods to the rear of that, women and children gathered again within the fortification of the broken Free State Hotel, the stronger spirits helping the weaker.

"Horatius at the bridge," said Walker as Hardie brought his slim height into place beside him.

"Our simple annals may never get into verse," said Hardie, his eye at his rifle-bore, examining its slow convolutions. "We should have kept the young English poet here."

"Our annals may end right here and now," said a melancholy man near.

"And I came out here for my health," another said flippantly, a fair clerical-looking man with an awkward grasp on his musket.

"Well, if worst comes to worst, you'll get a healthier grave than you ever dreamed of having," Hardie retorted shortly.

"My wife and children are on their way up the river," another muttered.

"They may be better off'n the women an' children that's a'ready here," said Milt Fisher loudly.

The simple broad feelings, thought Hardie, with which men have always gone into battle, fear and solicitude and high zeal.

A strange old man with deep lines lengthening his sad face—a man whom no years in this world could ever make other than strange to it—came and went among them, back and forth. A great cheer had welcomed his coming. He had no command in Lawrence but every man turned to look or to listen when he came near. Osawotamie Brown would never speak without hearers, in the territory. But today more than ever he carried with him that loneliness which he seemed always to bear as if it clothed him about. His words were all practical, but he uttered them with a kind of solemnity which made them seem like deep precepts. "Keep cool and fire low." "Don't waste that powder; make every shot do its full duty." "Be sure of the hindsight of your gun."

"He's a strong old fighter anyway," said Walker when Brown had passed on. Hardie was wondering where John Truman was for this hour.

Behind the breastworks there was no flurry, but intense readiness. From the hilltop high above scouts watched that slowly approaching mass and sent down frequent word. They saw the crowd detach itself from the tree-bordered curve of the Wakarusa and deliberately and irregularly make its way forward. The moment was undoubtedly at hand. Within the fort and in the frail houses women prayed and waited. Even Mrs. Marsh sat with idle hands.

"I wish Steve and I could have our last hour together," whimpered one woman, suddenly giving way.

"I wisht I could keep from prayin' all the time," another quivered. "It seems as if it made me feel worse."

"Hush, my dear," said Joseph Winter's strong solemn

wife, putting her arms about the frail one. "Pray the Lord for the cause instead of ourselves and you will not suffer such fear."

"We must not be too much afraid," said Mrs. Marsh, softening her voice. "Many of these men are very decent and kind men. They think they have a right to fight like this, but they will not let women and children be hurt." There had been a story afloat of the killing of a child and she feared it might be in the mind of these anxious mothers.

"They burned my house last week and I stayed all night on the prairie and my baby died the next day," said a woman raising her head. "I don't know whether you call that hurting women and children or not," she added bitterly. She took a long hard look at Mrs. Marsh and dropped her head on her arms again.

Behind the breastworks men were white under the dust and sunburn. Talk no longer meant anything. They would speak with their rifles while they could and then—

Yet some men would talk. "Geary didn't mean nothin'," Dick Milton said loudly. "Any man that Frank Pierce sends out here ain't goin' to turn Government troops on Atchison."

"It was a dodge," Selton whined. "He was just soft-soapin' us."

"All the help we get we'll give ourselves."

"What do you think?" said Hardie once to Walker, quietly. He had great confidence in this shrewd chivalrous soldier.

"I don't know. I don't know. We have no reason not to trust Geary. But it takes time to get over from Lecompton. If we only had enough ammunition— I haven't much opinion of them as fighters, but we'll soon run out of powder and shot." Then he added, "Thank God that you are not married, Hardie." It was the first discouraged word he had said. He had a wife and children at his home out on the California road.

Hardie turned whiter. Half his thoughts in the last hour had been going out to that hilltop house where brave women waited unprotected. What if he or John Truman

never went back to them. Where was John Truman?

Anyone could see the dark line now, not more than a mile away. A dozen men detached themselves and came spurring forward, overflowing with the joy of the occasion. They waved taunting hands aloft and shouted indistinguishable words and fired a volley of shots, and then wheeled and raced back.

"Don't waste shot on them," Abbott cautioned his men.

It became a game. Another jeering group rode forward, to repeat the performance.

"They think they're playing dare-base," said Walker coolly.

Then a body of men, two or three hundred, rode steadily forward. Though wearing nothing that approached uniform and though very unevenly mounted, they moved with something like regularity and had more of the appearance of soldiers than any body that had appeared before.

"This means business," said Abbott. Something like a breath of relief rose from the waiting men, yet many an eye turned once more to the hilltop and the western road.

The Missourians halted a few rods away. "Don't shoot first," was Captain Abbott's command. "Then shoot at a mark every time!"

But they had not a minute to wait.

Men like Hardie had a sense of being released at last for fighting, and their hearts throbbed for a moment, less with fear of ultimate consequences to the place than with satisfaction in setting loose the impulses they had long held in control. They forgot for the instant the hope of rescue and intervention and took aim as if this were the moment toward which they had been moving for months past. A bullet stung Hardie's arm and a man near him dropped his rifle and wrung a wounded hand. But the bullets chiefly sank in the earthworks or flew above their heads.

Suddenly Hugh Fraser and Whelan appeared, dashing down from their hilltop outlook. Even Fraser was excited, beyond anything ever seen in him before.

"The whole body is moving up behind these men. These are only covering them. Part of them are on foot. They

are spreading out to circle around." Whelan gasped and swore as he told it. Fraser gave silent stern corroboration.

"Men," said Abbott, "it's the last ditch for us. You know what you have to do." He gave Cracklin the east side and moved Walker farther to the west.

"Tell the women to be ready," he said in a hard voice to Lewis Hardie. No man wished to go back to the fort with that word. Hardie's face stiffened in dread of his duty.

"Oh—," he began, then turned away with resolution, but with his eyes drawn to their sharp outer angle and his mouth sternly closed. Those women waiting for suffering to come to them! Why should he be the messenger to them?

But Fraser suddenly stopped him as he moved from his place, with a quick excited hand on his shoulder.

"Listen, man!" he cried, and Hardie as he halted saw other men also stop to listen. Below the ragged, disconnected noises about them another sounded, steady, metrical, the sound of horses' feet moving regularly. Men looked in each other's eyes, questioning fearfully their own recognition of the sound. But no border mob ever came with that steady regular movement or rhythmical step.

While they stopped in their tracks, trembling joy leaping to their faces, they yet fearing to believe what they hoped, a gleam of blue began to show at the edge of the hilltop, and then the solid line of cavalry. Colonel Cooke had returned with his troops. The Governor had made good his word of authority.

"You are under the protection of the Federal authorities," said Governor Geary, sitting on his horse before the leaders, "as every citizen of this country is."

With his own guard he moved out toward the pro-slavery host, now halted and uncertain. Its leaders rode forward to meet him. Atchison and Reid and Titus and even Jones, scowling and discontented as ever before. The Governor waited for official information from them. "This is the Kansas militia," said Reid, "called into service by the Governor of the territory to destroy the town of Lawrence which has been in rebellion."

Governor Geary looked firmly back at the group. "I am now Governor of the territory," he said, "and in command of any force called out in Kansas. When I call militia it will be made up of Kansas men and not of outsiders. You may send your militia, or lead them, back to their homes."

His square figure and bearing spoke authority; his hard eye looked them down firmly. Colonel Cooke sat on horseback beside him and in the background were the troops of the Federal government. The volunteer commanders turned about to collect their army, and Sheriff Jones followed reluctantly in their train. "He won't be any kind of governor long," he snarled.

Since forenoon no one had seen John Truman. He and Widmer had been on the street early in the day, and he had been in talk with Robinson and Walker and other men. Since then, in the confusion of moving men, no one save Hardie had had him in especial in mind. Hardie, Fraser, Stivers, Watson, Miles, Amos, everyone had a place and a duty. But John had been assistant and adviser in many places; when he was not to be found in one spot he was always supposed to be in another. But no one had seen him now for hours. And in all the movement and confusion no one realized that he had not been on the ground.

Away on the other side of the Kaw, where the hills rose to close the valley in, he had been lying since early forenoon. Beside him lay a beautiful dead horse. Whenever he tried to rise, unbearable pain brought him to ease himself again on the ground.

Straight across, beyond the river, over the thin line of gray willows that rimmed it, he could see Lawrence. With his pocket-glasses he could make out the houses and line of street and earthen breastwork and moving bodies of men. After noon the sound of musketry came faintly to him. Attack had at last come, and he lay there.

In the night he had thought over and over the expediency of this action. When he came into Lawrence in the early morning he had drawn from one leader after

another his expectations. Among all men he found apprehension, the same as his own. "It isn't over," was the general conviction. "The United States troops should have stayed." And more than one said, "I wish Lane and Harvey would get back."

Then while he still considered he met coming up from the ferry, two men he had ridden with down at Black Jack, and stopped to talk with them, they eager for news of Lawrence. They had gone out with Captain Harvey but were returning. "They moved too slow and stopped to camp and we put out early and got ahead of them." Harvey and the much-needed Stubbs were only a few hours away, but were coming on deliberately and were thinking of making a side expedition.

John went straight to the ferry. Amos he saw as he went and told him his purpose. "You needn't say anything about it until I get back," he said. Amos nodded a serious, deep-eyed approval and John was off. There was no horse like Widmer for such a trip and no one better than himself to go. He would not take anyone else away from the defense to accompany him. A few hours would bring him back if he had good luck. He could have the Stubbs there by night. He firmly put aside the thought that battle might be on before that, and he not in it.

Widmer took the valley trail lightly and mounted the enclosing rim of hills as if with bounds. Widmer hated always the company of crowding and nosing and sidling horses, and loved a lonely road as if he were human. He gave a little toss as he struck the grassy upland shelf and settled to a long level gait. John thought tenderly of the joy Harvey had had in training him to that swift evenness. He himself relaxed a little in the pleasure of this isolation and clear morning and movement, when for some hours no new problem could rise before him.

And then suddenly, while he turned to rest his eyes on the valley, with its miles of untracked grass, Widmer stumbled, plunged, was down, and John, just escaping his body, on the ground beyond him.

It took him a moment to recover sense and then to straighten himself and turn cautiously, seeking for the

source of his pain. Beside him Widmer struggled to rise, and sank with a groan, and struggled and sank again. John sat up, tried to rise to his feet. His knee gave way and he dropped again to recover from the pain. The horse looked at him with entreating suffering eyes. John examined his own hurt, with hands more experienced and intelligent than they had been a year ago. No bone was broken, he was sure; it must be a sprain. He painfully crawled nearer the horse. A beautiful slender foreleg had been snapped and was bent cruelly back as the horse lay. Campers of some recent time—as the black rain-beaten ashes showed—had left a hole in the ground, perhaps for some crude cooking. And something had hidden it from Widmer's keen eyes.

John put out a shaking compassionate hand and the horse rubbed a grateful cheek to it. Then with an effort that shook his whole body he lifted himself once more, plunging and staggering, and then again fell, with a scream that seemed to fill the prairie. John covered his face a moment, trembling with pain and grief. Then he took out his revolver and dragging himself a little to one side for certain aim, he shot. He said in his sad heart the goodbye that Harvey would have said.

For an hour he lay there, looking over toward Lawrence, bearing his pain with cautious shiftings of position. Sometime during the day someone going toward the ferry would find him. All at once he started, lifting himself quickly to his elbow. Across the river floated the sound of firing, many concentrated shots. It was true then—the enemy had come! And he lay here. And somewhere off to the north were Lane and Harvey and their Lawrence men, still not knowing the need of them.

With his glass he could see movements dimly—the hurrying dark masses behind the earthworks in Lawrence —the vague scattered body out on the level beyond. Thousands of men there and only hundreds behind those low fortifications in Lawrence! He groaned bitterly as he watched them. Hardie would be fighting there, and Fraser and Stivers and Watson and Walker. If he could but

have fought beside them! He was paying too much for this, he groaned.

He took off his coat and then his cotton shirt. In a desperate fury he tore it into strips. With his knife he ripped his trouser-leg to the knee. Then painfully, with slow labored fingers, he bandaged the injured knee. The tight strips supported the hurt fibers and the strain was less. Slowly he began to crawl back along the road he had come.

He seemed to have been dragging himself for hours when he looked back to see how far he had progressed. Only a few rods away the body of Widmer showed where he had started.

His senses seemed to have been dulled a little with pain and shock, and he listened twice before he was sure that a wagon and horsemen were approaching. He lifted his head higher and turned to look about. Two men in a wagon and two horsemen were clearly in view a little to the north. A closer sight as he looked from the ground told him that they must be foragers from the ruffian camp.

"What's the use?" one of the men said, above his head. "That fellow's done for anyway."

But another, perhaps more humane, stooped to look and saw Truman's face. "Say—that's John Truman! He's one of the oners over at Yankee-town. We might get bounty on him anyway."

Truman said nothing. Rough hands tossed him into the wagon, which an unsuccessful foray had left empty of anything but some horse-feed, as nonchalantly as if he were merely a roadside find. They asked no questions and made no remark upon him. It was as if the varied and prolonged process of this warfare had left them incurious as to any detail of it.

They remounted and proceeded. All at once the one who had taken John's glasses and was looking through them cried, "Look there—over there—at Lawrence!"

He passed the glasses to the next man, who barked out an oath as he looked through them. Above Truman's head they talked back and forth, swearing, exclaiming. John

grasped the side of the wagon-box, trying to lift himself that he also might see. But as he did so the driver lashed his horses with his whip, and he fell to the bottom of the wagon again with a cruel jerk as it lurched sharply forward and then went bounding and tossing over the road behind the running horses.

XLV

THE Lecompton road was full that night. The whole open country was full, as men scattered to their homes. The country was different, the breath of it confident, strong. There was a tremulousness of relief from danger past, but none of fear. Men breathed freely and rode at ease as they went back to waiting homes.

Horseman after horseman drew up at the Truman door in the early evening, for exclamation or congratulation. Henry Watson and his wife were to stay all night. Tom Selton came to take his family home. Men could not talk enough, it seemed, as one after another dropped at the door to tell some yet untold phase of this victory.

Hardie and Judge Sayle cantered up at dusk and found the room full, and full too of excited bubbling talk and an under-layer of solemn trembling gratification.

"It is more than any one victory before," Hugh Fraser, tired and serious, was saying as he leaned by the door. "It's a victory with the government on our side."

"I bet yuh it ain't over though." Tom Selton had loaded his sleepy youngest over his shoulder like a limp package, but paused to pipe out his gloomy forecast ere he went.

"I think the worst is over," a solemn man from Watson's neighborhood ventured. "They will never get three thousand men together again."

"I congratulate you, Mrs. Truman," said the Judge. "I can't help feeling that somehow you must have been responsible for the successful conclusion of the day." Some of the others looked a disapproving wonder that anyone could talk idle gallantry on such a night. But the Judge had been carrying a rifle all day and edging into place in the front line when battle promised.

"It isn't complete yet, because my husband hasn't come. Didn't you bring him?"

"I haven't seen him for some hours," said the Judge vaguely. He looked at Hardie.

"I thought he was here by this time," answered Hardie. "I think I saw him with Robinson last."

One man and another appeared to have seen him—with Robinson or Walker or Abbott, they did not remember just when. Selton's opinion, as he finally departed, was that he had ridden back to Lecompton with the Governor. Ellen looked puzzled but she did not persist, and let the talk go back, as it must, to the progress and conclusion of affairs.

Out in the kitchen Phœbe lingered, trifling with a semblance of occupation. She looked through the open door at Hardie. She took down a light wrap from the wall and put it about her. She looked back at Hardie and smiled a faint invitation. Hardie was beside her instantly, regardless of any observant looks.

"I have to go down to Mrs. Laird's for a minute," she said. "Will you go with me?" He answered formally and in a moment they were outside, in the growing dusk.

"Miss Murray," he said instantly as he paused, opening the gate behind the house. "Apologies have been consuming me ever since that powder affair. I couldn't get a word with you before, in all this excitement. When I think of my impudence, my ghastly rudeness, I am stunned with shame."

Phœbe had stopped beside him and was looking at him now with a faint smile. In his absorption of embarrassment he did not interpret it.

"As if I hadn't seen women put to enough risk and suffering here! It is good of you to listen to me after all that," he went on humbly. "To think of sending you back to face those ruffians—after the rest of my performance!—to think of it!" he burst out. "I should have let them have all the powder in the world rather than that!"

Phœbe leaned a little nearer, her smile deeper, tremulous. "Oh, Lewis Hardie," she said. It was a voice he had never heard before—something a little like it to Matt or Owen, something a little like it to Mary or her baby, but never this voice.

She put out her hand and laid it on his clenched fist resting on the gatepost, and then her other hand, together enclosing his. "Oh, Lewis Hardie," she said again.

This was no Phœbe he had known—this coming toward him—this inviting, welcoming! But after all his mistakes and the conviction to which she had so long compelled him, he dared not see what he seemed to see.

"Don't let me delude myself," he begged, partly bewildered. "Am I stupid as well as brutal?"

"Stupid but not brutal," she said. She dropped her hands but stood straight before him, her reserve, her self-defense all laid aside. "Don't you know when you have done the right thing?" A faint tremble, partly amusement, chiefly emotion, ran through her voice.

"I don't see how that could be anything but wrong," he said. He timidly took her hand and then at her answering clasp dropped it to take her in his arms and look into her face.

"Phœbe," he said huskily, "are you allowing this? Am I coming near you at last?"

"So near," she said. "Oh, I've wanted it in these hard days—and you in such danger!" She lifted her face to his. In all his repressed dreams, through dark watching nights and hard wearying days, he had never half dreamed how sweet this moment could be.

"You have forgiven me?" He returned to the original topic later as they wandered back from the Lairds' house. His chivalry had not yet reached satisfaction.

Phœbe considered. Should she tell him fully, or merely be satisfied with her own knowledge? What good in analysis if one had result?

"Yes," she said, "at once." And she added, her hand in his, "I think it will be the only time we shall ever have to talk about forgiveness between us."

Hardie's heart gave a leap and his throat suddenly tightened, at this view of a long sweetness of life she was picturing. Beyond this present roughness and harshness, this life of loud quarreling voices and furious shots and

demand and danger, would stretch years of gentleness and the free gracious living he loved.

After the bitterness of this clanging day—lovers' touches, lovers' words!

"To have all this at last!" He drew a long controlled breath. "You have treated me hardly, Phœbe." The poignancy of his earlier humility seemed to be beginning to assuage. "And I don't think I understand you yet. If I didn't so much want to believe you loved me, my credulity would be sorely tested."

"I even love things in you that you don't know anything about yourself," said Phœbe.

"I am grateful enough to have the things I do know overlooked. My love!—I wonder if my Scotch tongue will ever say all the things I know for it to say."

They had reached the step. The house-door above them was thrown open and Ellen Truman stood there in a square of light. "Lewis Hardie!" she cried. "Where is John? Where is my husband?"

XLVI

ALL the hard nights Ellen Truman had yet known put together, would not have made up the sum of that one. John out fighting with other men and in danger with them—she had borne that day by day. But John away by himself when others had come home safely, lost to the knowledge of his friends—who knew what he was suffering alone? These turbulent men, scattered without a scratch at their prey, a smell of blood—what compensation might they not be taking for their disappointment? Hardie and Fraser and Stivers and Watson, and how many more she knew not, were off seeking. They had forgotten weariness upon the certainty of John's disappearance. Amos had been asleep in the barn since early evening and they had not wakened him; the day had been too hard for his strength. Ellen had firmly sent Mary and Mrs. Watson to bed, with a sharpness in her firmness to which they could not offer resistance. Phœbe waited and watched, sometimes with Ellen, sometimes leaving her alone. There was a complexity in Ellen's anxiety which she could not touch.

At midnight a horseman came, a single horseman. Ellen sprang up, her clenched hands pressed to her throat. It was Lewis Hardie who entered.

"No," he said painfully. "We haven't seen him. But the man that ran the ferry this morning said he took him and Widmer across. No one has seen him since that we can find."

He stopped in an embarrassment that was sickening to himself. Ellen's hands relaxed and dropped and she stared at him with a puzzlement that for the moment loosened the absorption of fear.

"I thought I should bring you this much," he said. "I must go back at once."

"But where—" began Ellen. Then she stopped. She did not know what question to frame. "Thank you," she said faintly.

Hardie, with a look at her of despairing distress, went back to his horse. Phœbe slipped out after him for a moment, but returned almost instantly, careful lest Ellen should think they were occupied with surmise that was not for her ears.

"Let me make you a cup of coffee, dear," Phœbe urged. "Or couldn't you go to bed now? There can't be more news for hours, perhaps."

Ellen, standing in the middle of the floor, seemed to look at her without seeing. Her white face had stiffened until it seemed as if it could not move into any other expression. Phœbe waited for a long minute, hoping desperately for the gift of something right to say.

"Phœbe," Ellen spoke sharply. "You are sorry for me because you and Lewis Hardie think John went off to join those men toward Leavenworth this morning instead of staying in Lawrence."

"Ellen," Phœbe answered almost impatiently, "it wouldn't make any difference if I did think that. If John went off to fight there he was perfectly convinced that it was the best way to help Lawrence. Lewis Hardie knows that too."

"No, it couldn't be. But I know it was something else. He saw a thing to do over on the north side. I know perfectly the kind of purpose he had. But oh—why did he go alone?"

She walked away to press her face against the window, as if pressing it against the darkness outside. Phœbe visioned as well as she the lone way John had gone and the lone hidden fate that might have overtaken him. From such a way Philip Livingstone had been brought home. A hundred men must know John and wish him harm, as a fighter for freedom. And the beautiful horse might alone furnish reason for violence.

"But I'll not forecast it," Ellen suddenly said firmly, turning from the window.

She moved about the room a little, setting it in more

scrupulous order after the occupation of the evening. She went up to look at the boys in their midnight sleep and came softly back again without touching them. She urged Phœbe to go to bed.

"Let me stay, dear," Phœbe begged. "I can't sleep."

The great darkness, which somewhere perhaps held her tragedy, seemed to press in on the little lighted house. For Ellen all the world seemed abruptly to have turned hostile. She had loved its fears and its dangers once, as well as its sweetness. After the sweet unity she and John had attained, after the succor of Lawrence yesterday, after the hope of rest from danger—just as she had for one hour said, "The hardest call to courage is over and the happier purpose of life will begin again," she was dragged back once more into the cruel and the hostile. A hundred times she had measured the possibilities of John's death in this war; a hundred times she had measured what her own grief would be. But she saw now how far short the measure of mere surmise was.

"Phœbe," she said at the turn of the night. She had been watching the girl's face and seen how in spite of herself a soft content would often underlie the solicitude of her lock. "Have you and Lewis Hardie—?"

"Yes," said Phœbe. She could not at this moment say more, lest she show a satisfaction her sensitiveness thought now inappropriate.

"Oh, I'm glad, dear. He is of the finest. We have tried him here in every possible way. Don't be afraid to show your happiness, dear, no matter what happens. Mary will be glad with you, don't fear. And so would I be. I was afraid you were never going to see him properly," she added.

"Oh, I was foolish," Phœbe confessed—an unbent Phœbe, an expressive Phœbe—"I was afraid of taking too much, of not being on equal terms."

"How did you get the queen off her throne?" Ellen smiled even at this moment.

"It was the day of the gunpowder plot, the way he ordered me around—short and rude, but so funny, as if I were Bob or John. Just like man to man."

"And that pleased you." Ellen mused. "Let me tell you something, dear, out of my wisdom." She spoke with her old briskness. "You're young enough still to think that you can sort out a man and take what you like and let the rest go. But you can't. You have to take all. A man can't be as much of a knight as Lewis Hardie is and not have the kind of romantic notions he has too. Of course he has us on pedestals. You may as well expect to be a pillar saint all the rest of your life. And that's why he's so lovable," she added.

"Phœbe," she said presently, "don't be too brave when your time comes, or too proud of being brave. Don't do too much. Only half the burden is yours after all."

The morning grew into gray and then into pale rose and then into cool blue and gold. Phœbe slept from time to time, but Ellen waited expectantly upon the steps of every horseman that passed along the road. At dawn came Hugh Fraser, worn with forty-eight hours of hard action, hesitant over his news.

"They found his horse over on the north side," he said. He halted—"his leg broken, and shot in the head."

"Oh, Widmer! Poor Harvey!"

"Some men started off by Franklin a little while ago. They thought they'd find some of the militia still and find out something. I thought I'd go home for a bit," he said apologetically.

"Yes, indeed. You must go back to Jessie. I am not the only woman to be anxious for her husband."

But he told her none of his surmise and she asked nothing as she turned away. But what did it mean—what could it mean? "Oh, John!" she murmured to herself brokenly.

Then at last came Amos, entering quietly from his hay-mow bed to take buckets out for the milking.

"John isn't back?" he asked in matter-of-fact tones.

"No."

"It wasn't much use after all, his going," said Amos.

"Going where?" cried Phœbe.

"Out to get Jim Lane and the Lawrence men back."

"How?"

"Two of Harvey's men came in and they told John that Lane wasn't going to Nebraska and that they were all on their way back, between here and Easton, but they were taking their time. So John went out to hurry them."

"Oh, I knew, I knew!" said Ellen to herself.

She slipped into her own room, for once unlent to any sojourner, and flung herself on her bed. The tangle of feeling in which she had half-blindly been trying to find and maintain clear stability of emotion, was suddenly unwound. She saw all clearly. The sacrifice John must have made in taking himself away from what might have been the last great fight for Lawrence, the risk of misunderstanding of his action, his lonely turning away from comradeship in danger and in battle—other men might be having the shoulder to shoulder fight while he chose the lonely ride for his portion—she realized it all in a flash. In a vision that comprehended the whole she saw too his taking the act in his hands and offering it to her as a gift, a substitution for everything in which he had before dissatisfied her. In tears that had been repressed or denied all through the hours of the night, she wept out her recognition of his sacrifice.

The household was stirring. The boys' ringing voices, a faint cry from the baby, soothed by Mary's soft voice, Mrs. Watson's level tones in some sensible suggestion, a sound from the kitchen showing Phœbe's capable presence —all the life in which she was enmeshed and which could not go on without her. She put aside weeping and rose. The dreary day was hurrying on and many needed her. She went to the outer door, to let the fresh air blow away signs of tears before she turned to her family. The first bright sunshine was touching the warmth of the September hills and giving rare color to the hovering mists.

Along the road, a dark mass against the morning sky, came men, horsemen surrounding a slowly-moving wagon. For hours everything that went along that road had seemed to be coming to her, but this time Ellen repressed expectation.

Yet there was Watson—and Lewis Hardie—and strange men driving. Oh, hurry the slow wagon! What did its heavy wheels bring?

Hardie saw her first and sent his horse cantering forward. "We have him, Ellen," he cried. The light on his tired face was her reassurance. The wagon was at the door and John, stretched on hay in its bed, opened his eyes on Ellen's face as she leaned from the doorstep. He would have looked longer in silence but for the anxiety there. "Only a little hurt, dear," he said. Men were already preparing to carry him to his bed.

Stivers, making a detour by Lawrence had collected Doctor Tracy and brought him out and while men waited to hear his verdict and fed their horses and Phœbe and Mrs. Watson hurried forward a breakfast for them all, he quickly examined and pronounced on the hurts.

"No break—a sprain that is no better for being left around twenty-four hours and some bruises his friends on the other side gave him. It will hurt like a border ruffian conscience but he will be a good man again."

It was not until bandaging was over that Ellen fully realized who were the party to bring John home, or questioned how he came. In that first moment she had passed over the men's faces, hardly seeing them. Now she realized, not only Watson and Stivers and Hardie, but Horace Evans and another man of bearing as fine and gentle as Evans himself. Ellen, recollecting herself, gave a courteous hand to them and they, a little embarrassed, a little conscious even in their natural ease, took it.

"Where did you find him?" she asked, as if they too had had an interest in recovering him.

The second man turned to Evans, a little awkward.

"In the Missouri camp," said Evans. "Some men brought him in a prisoner late yesterday. Then when they began to break up camp they didn't know what to do with him."

"And you waited to bring him back?" Ellen cried. A breath of appreciation came from the other women.

"My friend here had a wagon and we thought it was our

debt to bring him safe home. We met your friends as we came."

They could all recognize far more than was said—the camp breaking up and moving off in reckless irresponsibility and discontent, the men embarrassed with their prisoner and negligently discarding him to await any chance that might happen.

"And you took the risk?" cried Ellen again.

"It was not much of a risk. I have friends among Free State men and I have sometimes tried," he said with a half-whimsical smile, "to be a brake on the wheels of the pro-slavery leaders."

"The Juggernaut wheels," said Stivers.

The southerners flushed a little. "I fear they have proved that sometimes." Mary drew back a little, gathering her baby to her, and turned away.

"You have put us in your debt a second time, Mr. Evans," said Ellen warmly.

"A third," said Phœbe, smiling kindly upon him.

Evans made a little gesture of definitely putting something aside. "There would be no such debts," he said gravely, "if our men did not make occasion for them. Even when our side is right on general principle, we have much to apologize for."

From the whole silent circle a question seemed to direct itself to him and he went on as if answering it. "In this army that has just been disbanded there were many men like us, here to fight in a real battle if there was one, or to prevent unjustified outrages if there was not. I have ridden round a good deal." His eyes turned to Phœbe, as if he allowed himself for once to lay this before her, and then turned away again.

"I am glad it is over for this time, sir," said Stivers frankly.

"We have not given up the principle," Evans said firmly. "But all the war out here has been without profit. I think," he said slowly, "the zest has gone out of it, even for men like Atchison. But you have not convinced Washington yet." He hesitated. "I am sorry that it keeps

apart those who really have fundamental things more important in common.''

The other man nodded agreement, standing quietly at ease and giving to all the circle his pleasant humorous eye. I think this may be our last visit to your territory until we can make a more neighborly one,'' he said with courteous gesture and turned to go. No one but Evans knew,—hardly even Phœbe herself, standing beside Hardie—that another kind of human chapter was also ending here.

All day men stopped at the house to ask for John, or came in with solicitude or congratulation. The story of John's effort and escape was widespread. Even Doctor Robinson came for a hurried moment, and Captain Walker, at last going out to his home on the California road.

''It was a great risk,'' they said. ''It came near being the worst loss about the whole affair.'' And Ellen's eyes shone.

''This was really better than a victory by fighting,'' Robinson said, ''though less gratifying to the feelings of a fighter, perhaps. This is a recognition by law and government that is the most of a conquest. We made a step forward.''

''Yes, we've inched along some,'' said Walker as they went away.

Amos brought in some letters in the afternoon, one of his own in his hand. ''In his preoccupation Jones allowed some mail to pass through,'' Hardie had said as he handed them to him.

''Harriet has written again for me to come back,'' he said. ''She is low in spirit. I think I will go, now the way is clear. I don't think I have done much for the cause here after all, and I have caused good men to put their lives in danger,'' he added humbly.

''Oh, yes, you have,'' said John and Ellen cheerfully in unison. ''Anyway,'' said Ellen, ''someone has, for see how much has been gained.'' It would have been hard to point it out, but Ellen's spirit was high today. ''But you go home for the winter and perhaps you will both come out

in the spring. We will try to have a little fighting left for you."

"Whatever will hasten the cause," he said solemnly. "I think the best now will be merely to tell the story of Kansas wherever I can, in season and out of season. The cry of the black man still rises to the Lord."

"Bless his old Amos heart!" said Ellen tenderly, as he went off to make his small preparations for travel.

Mary brought her blinking son to show him his first "hero man." "This is the first time he has consciously seen one," she said. "I want him to recognize you." Color was coming back to Mary. She looked like a brave pathetic story, written in pink and white and gold.

"Mr. Marsh says," she announced, "that that little tight house beside them, that the man they thought was pro-slavery built, is empty. The man moved out yesterday and went back to Missouri with Atchison's men. Mr. Stivers says I can have it, he thinks. So I can settle down soon, Ellen, and not crowd you dear people any longer."

"You can't take the baby away for another month," said Ellen, "and by that time he will refuse to go, he'll be so fond of us. But you can be thinking about it all you want to."

But Mary went away to talk to her son of his new home.

"The Watsons are going home to stay," said Ellen, "and Amos is going and now Mary is planning to go. I think there is no danger of losing Lewis Hardie from our fold though." She told of him and Phœbe. "Isn't that satisfying at last—those two adorable beings! And isn't it sweet to have a love-story flowing along right in our midst?—though I suspect the course has not always been of a rippling smoothness."

"Will Hardie be willing to go east? What will the Murrays say?"

"Say—" With a light wave of her hand Ellen made all Murrays negligible and dismissed them to endless distances. "Phœbe doesn't know it but down in her heart she has all the plans made for running this territory."

"You know, Ellen," said John looking at her anxiously while he stroked her hand lying on the coverlet. "The

danger isn't over yet, by any means. I think the worst is. To have the United States troops sent against them is the most conclusive thing that could have happened. But we don't know, even yet. We don't know today how many people are suffering or anxious. And as for us, I have no doubt made enemies who may seek me out personally. You could go home with Phœbe, to rest for a while. But I think you want to stay?" he said confidently.

"The worst *is* over," said Ellen. "The worst for us was to disagree about action. I was wrong but I am not going to tell you how. But if I were to go back to two years ago and Bristol and Eli Thayer's talk, I would come every step of the way again. It's been God's chance of a lark, as that gay young man we never found, said."

So they talked.

"I've hardly had a moment yet," said Hardie, taking Phœbe away from the house a minute in the dusk. "That house has been the most densely populated spot in the world ever since the first day I saw you. The Ghetto would be nothing to it. How John and Ellen get any talk ever I don't see—Beloved!" he said, bending over her. "Oh, Phœbe, I didn't dare to dream that you could ever be like this! I thought that even at the best for me, beyond my hope, you would still be remote from me. I never thought you would give so much."

Phœbe withdrew a little to look at him. "You will learn," she said, coming back to him with a sweetness of complete giving.

"Let us go out a little on the prairie," she said. "And then you must go home—there isn't room for you here tonight—and get some of the sleep you have missed for a week." The bit of homely solicitude took his voice for a minute.

"What a night last night was!" he said. "Looking for John and I knew not what, and thinking of you and this!"

They walked away a little from the house and all its buildings and looked on what they had looked on so often before, the open stretch of grass with its rise and fall faintly

seen in the starlight, leading their eyes on to endless dim reaches.

To own the prairie thus!—and with it, these touches of hands and this meeting of eyes!

"To have this come, Phœbe, just at this milestone in the battle! And look out across there!"

"Dear," he said after a minute, "after it is all over, and the fighting day is ended, will you be willing to live out here?"

Phœbe suppressed a little impatient breath. After all, she had years in which to teach him, and the gunpowder day might happen again.

THE END

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